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THE ORIGIN OF THE UNITED STATES SECURITY COMMITMENT TO THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

by

Gary Joseph Porfert

June 1987

Thesis Advisor: Claude Buss

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The Origin of the United States Security Commitment to the Republic of Korea

by

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Captain, United States Army
B.S., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1977

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis illuminates the nature of the United States security commitment to the Republic of Korea by analyzing its origin. It is concluded that the commitment is a function of the American approach to foreign policy, and especially US-Soviet relations, more than of any intrinsically vital US interests in Korea. Korea policy from 1945 to 1953 is analyzed in terms of a debate between proponents of differing approaches to commitment. The seeming inconsistency between the 1949 troop withdrawal and the US intervention in 1950 is seen as the result of a shift in overall foreign policy rather than a reassessment of Korea's geostrategic importance to the United States.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION 7

A. A THEORY OF COMMITMENT 8

B. HYPOTHESIS 12

II. THE BEGINNING OF US INVOLVEMENT IN KOREA 15

A. THE POSTWAR CONTEXT 15

B. TRUSTEESHIP 21

C. "PATIENCE AND FIRMNESS" 25

D. HOLDING THE LINE IN KOREA 28

E. THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE 37

F. FAILURE OF KOREAN AID 40

III. CONTAINMENT 42

A. CONTAINMENT ACCORDING TO KENNAN 42

B. THE DEBATE OVER SIGNIFICANCE 47

C. DELAY OF WITHDRAWAL 61

D. THE ARMY PUSH 68

IV. THE DEFENSE PERIMETER 82

A. THE CONCEPT OF AN ASIAN DEFENSE PERIMETER . . 82

B. TROOP WITHDRAWAL 85

C. ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE 89

V. KOREA IN AMERICA'S ASIA POLICY 104

A. THE MODERATE APPROACH 104

B. AGONIZING REAPPRAISAL 115

VI. NSC 68 121

A. A SHIFT OF ASSUMPTIONS 121

B. THE KOREAN INTERVENTION 125

C. FORMALIZATION OF COMMITMENT 133

VII. CONCLUSION 138

NOTES 141

BIBLIOGRAPHY 158

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST 163

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I. INTRODUCTION

The United States occupied the southern portion of the Korean peninsula at the end of the Second World War. Except for a short period, from the completion of withdrawal in the summer of 1949 to the US intervention in the Korean War in the summer of 1950, US forces have been there ever since. The United States has a significant and long-standing commitment to the Republic of Korea. Yet this commitment has been repeatedly called into question. US forces were withdrawn from Korea in 1949 because the military concluded that Korea was not of sufficient strategic significance to justify the continued presence of American troops. They were reintroduced to counter the North Korean invasion, and maintained at a consistent level while the South Korean military was built up. But, as early as 1963, the desirability of maintaining troops in the Republic of Korea (ROK) was once again questioned.[1] President Nixon withdrew the 7th Infantry Division in 1971, and in 1977 President Carter announced the withdrawal of the 2d Infantry Division, the last remaining major US combat unit in Korea. Although this last decision was ultimately reversed, it once again called into question the nature and strength of the US commitment to the Republic of Korea. Why has this

commitment, maintained over so many years at such a great cost to the United States both in treasure and in lives, been so often questioned in Washington, and so consistently doubted in Seoul?

A. A THEORY OF COMMITMENT

Franklin B. Weinstein has advanced some ideas about the nature of international commitments which go a long way toward explaining this apparent anomaly. He observed that there was "widespread uncertainty about the meaning of commitments," and attributed this to differences in goals and priorities between nations, as well as differences in assumptions about the meaning of a commitment. These latter differences occur because "there are fundamentally different concepts of what a commitment is."[2]

Weinstein defines two concepts of commitment: "situational" and "nonsituational." In the situational concept, "commitments are inherent in the situation, their verbalization is basically unimportant, and their fulfillment is contingent on whether they still serve national interests in the situation." Such commitments are "transitory, reflecting little more than the arrangement of international forces at a given moment." In the nonsituational concept, on the other hand, "the primary impetus for a commitment's fulfillment comes not from a continuing reassessment of national interests but from a

conviction that a government must keep all its commitments," regardless of how well they serve the national interest in a given situation. But, in contrast to the situational concept, which assumes an implicit commitment based on national interest even in the absence of a formal commitment, the verbalization of commitment is critical under the nonsituational concept, since the salient issues are prestige and credibility on a global scale, rather than inherent interest in a particular country or region.

Advocates of both types of commitment share a common goal: the national interest. They differ, however, in their understanding of what that interest is. Supporters of the situational concept emphasize immediate, specific geopolitical interests, while those of the nonsituational concept argue that principles and obligations represent a more fundamental, long-range interest.

While the situational commitment has been dominant in history, the nonsituational variant has emerged as a significant factor in postwar international relations. The commitments entered into by the United States in particular have been primarily nonsituational. Weinstein suggests that this is because American decision makers have perceived US commitments as unchallengeable, self-sustaining and interdependent; the nation's honor is at stake. This approach is reinforced by "the legalistic-moralistic strain dominant in the rhetoric of United States foreign policy,"

as well as the "ideological and moralistic character" of commitments in the context of the world-wide struggle between democracy and Communism. The nature of American politics has also contributed to the development of nonsituational commitments, often accompanied by overblown, universalistic rhetoric; a policy couched in terms of the defense of freedom is easier to 'sell' to Congress.

One problem with the nonsituational commitment, however, is that, once established, it is very difficult to retract. Indeed, the longer the commitment exists, the greater the stake in it. Over the years, substantial resources are expended; the dominant power becomes increasingly identified with its weaker ally, investing ever growing amounts of prestige in the relationship. The commitment, as Weinstein observes,

> tends to acquire a substantial life of its own, taking on significance as a symbolic demonstration of a country's dedication to principles, security interests, or other considerations removed from the situation with which the commitment is concerned.

At the extreme, a sort of reductio ad absurbum takes hold: the commitment must be kept because it has been kept for so long.

This inherent characteristic of nonsituational commitments is reinforced by the nature of the American system. Ideals have always played a part in US foreign policy; particularly in the context of the ideological struggle of the Cold War, the maintenance of commitments was

perceived "as a sign of moral virtue, as a proof of a government's dedication to unquestioned ideals." The dependence of the leadership in a democracy on public support also tends to make it difficult to end a commitment. Since the commitment is justified in terms of enduring principles, rather than as a response to a particular situation, abandonment of the commitment is tantamount to an admission of error for having made it in the first place. This is especially true in the American system, where the process of acquiring Congressional approval for a policy often leads the administration to exaggerate its nonsituational content: "The very process of defending a commitment against its critics makes it harder for the government to abandon or modify it." Rather than do this, a democratic leadership will frequently "respond to evidence of a commitment's disutility by seeking to expand it and to devise new justifications for it . . . ."

Finally, the fact that bureaucracies become identified with particular commitments makes it difficult to end or even significantly change them. In much the same manner as the administration, the bureaucracy can acquire a stake in the commitment as a result of its involvement in the building and defense of that commitment. In addition, bureaucracies become involved over time as the implementers of a commitment: "the involvement of large sections of the bureaucracy in responsibilities related to the fulfillment

of a commitment gives them a stake in the successful implementation of the commitment."

This phenomenon is clearly observable in the commitments entered into by the United States in the decade following the end of the Second World War. An effort was made to secure world peace by the establishment of a system of collective security, which Weinstein calls "the clearest example of a nonsituational commitment." Commitments were undertaken "with little or no consideration of the area's strategic importance or of the feasibility of trying to defend it against the kind of threat which it was likely to encounter." Local considerations were subordinated to "the establishment of the principle that aggression is impermissible." Once these commitments were established, it became extremely difficult to abandon or modify them, even long after the original rationales upon which they were based ceased to be relevant.

B. HYPOTHESIS

The United States security commitment to the Republic of Korea has always been, and continues to be, a nonsituational commitment. Indeed, the lengthy policy debate which determined America's Korea policy in the immediate post-World War II years centered around the question of which framework was appropriate, with the military on the one hand arguing that a commitment to South Korea was not

justifiable from a situational perspective because of its low strategic value, and the State Department arguing on the other hand that a commitment was necessary from the nonsituational perspective because of the importance of events in Korea to American prestige and credibility in other, more vital areas. Seen in this way, the seeming reversal of policy from the withdrawal in 1949 to the intervention in the Korean War in 1950 does not represent a reassessment of Korea so much as a shift in approach to the handling of foreign policy as a whole.

The Republic of Korea, on the other hand, has consistently sought an unequivocal, situational commitment, based on a recognition of the vital importance of the Korean peninsula to the stability of Northeast Asia and hence the security of the United States. This dichotomy in perceptions of the basis of the US commitment is the explanation of the persistent misunderstandings which have characterized US-ROK relations. Since the US commitment is nonsituational, it is a function of the American view of the world, and most especially of the struggle between the US and the USSR and between democracy and Communism. As this view has changed over the years, as the Cold War has ebbed and flowed, the perceived utility of the security commitment to the ROK has changed also. By contrast, the ROK has been constantly confronted with a seemingly implacable enemy, North Korea, whose determination to dominate the entire

peninsula seems undimished today, three and a half decades after the Korean War.

Most recently, under the Reagan Administration, relations between the US and the ROK have improved tremendously. This improvement, however, has resulted because of American acceptance of the Korean definition of the nature of the commitment, which has in turn been possible because of a heightened perception of the threat represented by an expansive Soviet Union. Regardless of the rhetoric, though, the underlying logic of the American commitment has not changed. While it cannot be denied that the United States has many significant interests in the Republic of Korea, they are no more vital, and in many ways even less so, than they were in 1949 when US occupation forces were withdrawn. As the world situation inevitably evolves, the United States will once again begin to question its security commitment to the ROK, particularly the continued presence of ground combat forces. If this process is not to result in even more acrimonious debates, and a renewed feeling of betrayal on the part of the South Koreans, it is imperative that the true nature of the US security commitment be understood, and that future US-ROK relations be placed on the firm foundation of this understanding.

II. THE BEGINNING OF US INVOLVEMENT IN KOREA

A. THE POSTWAR CONTEXT

As the United States pursued its goal of military victory in the Second World War, it became increasingly clear that the postwar world would be very different from the one which had preceeded it. In Northeast Asia, the most fundamental change was, of course, the removal of Japan as the dominant regional power. As Akira Iriye observes, "The anticipated defeat of Japan meant the removal from the scene of the one nation that had provided a stable pattern of big-power politics for several decades."[3] US Asian policy, in this context, can be viewed as a search for a new regional balance. In the process, US interest in the Korean peninsula, long quiescent, inevitably revived.[4]

While Korea had long been pivotal in regional affairs, it had never been considered to be of particular importance to the United States. American interests, as expressed in the Open Door Notes, were mainly commercial, and centered on China. Even when the US began to expand westward, its interest was in the Pacific, as opposed to the Asian mainland, and, in the Taft-Katsura agreement, it had willingly acquiesced in Korea's status as a Japanese colony in exchange for Japanese recognition of US interests in the Philippines. Though decried by the Koreans as an example of

American perfidy, this was no more than a recognition of Japan's status as the dominant power in the region following its victory in the Russo-Japanese War.[5]

It is understandable, then, that consideration of Korea in the postwar context focused on its effect on the new regional balance of power. The idea of a Korean state itself playing a significant part, which would have implied a situational commitment on the part of the US, was never seriously considered. It was clear, rather, that the demise of Japan would create a void which must be filled, among the remaining regional powers, by either China or the Soviet Union. The United States, now firmly albeit somewhat reluctantly established as the dominant Pacific power, did not envision for itself a direct role on the Asian mainland. Soviet expansion was regarded as inevitable, but US interests would be protected by a united and friendly China.[6] The result, the new East Asian world order, would be what Iriye calls "some sort of condominium . . . on the basis of the vastly extended power of the Soviet Union and the limited involvement of the United States, with a rehabilitated and stronger China standing in between."[7] This scheme, which called for the establishment of China as a Great Power, was launched at the Cairo Conference in 1943, at which it was declared that all Chinese territories seized by Japan would be returned.[8] At the same conference, it was

decided that, following the surrender of the Japanese, an international trusteeship would be established in Korea.

America's Korea policy at this time was marked by what is, in retrospect, an almost incredible tentativeness. John Lewis Gaddis aptly refers to Roosevelt's approach to many postwar issues as a "strategy of postponement," and Korea was a prime example.[9] In one sense, this was almost inevitable considering Roosevelt's goals in Korea, and the lack of a good vehicle for attaining these goals in the absence of a strong China. The United States wanted to preclude domination of Korea by any outside power, but did not want to dominate Korea itself. Roosevelt was convinced, as his distant cousin Theodore had been in 1905, that the Koreans were incapable of governing themselves. To avoid an otherwise inevitable Sino-Soviet contention for Korea, Roosevelt settled on the idea of an international trusteeship, which he envisioned might last as long as forty years. The details of this plan were never clearly expressed, but that was not really important. As Stephen Pelz observes, the concept of trusteeship was "a satisficing device."[10] It provided maximum flexibility in a period of great uncertainty.

The Korean trusteeship plan persisted through subsequent wartime planning and became part of the Yalta system.[11] A subtle shift occurred in US perceptions, however, as the weakness of China became increasingly apparent. Bilateral

relations with the Soviet Union became the key to regional stability.[12] Roosevelt clearly considered cooperation with the Soviet Union to be a very viable option, and hoped to coopt Stalin by giving him a stake in the postwar system--a policy Gaddis calls "containment by integration."[13] Hardly an idealist, Roosevelt nevertheless believed that the Russians would cooperate because it was in their interest to do so.

One minor result of this belief was the fact that wartime planning for the occupation of Korea, such as it was, did not envision any involvement by US forces. It was assumed that the Soviets would work with the United States to establish the planned trusteeship, regardless of which side's forces actually accepted surrender of Japanese forces in Korea.[14] As late as the Postdam Conference, General Marshall told the Russians that the US did not plan to land forces on the Korean peninsula.[15]

This approach was called into question, however, as the Russians moved into Eastern Europe. The pattern that clearly emerged, from the American perspective, was one of heavy-handed Communist control wherever the Red Army went. In response, some of now-President Truman's advisors began to question the wisdom of allowing the Russians to occupy all of Korea. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, observing the evolving situation in Korea, called it "the Polish question transplanted to the Far East," and suggested that

"at least a token force of American soldiers or marines be stationed in Korea during the trusteeship."[16] W. Averell Harriman, Ambassador to the Soviet Union, recommended that "landings be made to accept surrender of the Japanese troops at least on the Kwantung Peninsula and in Korea," to relieve Russian pressure on China.[17] Edwin W. Pauley, Truman's friend and Reparations Commissioner, hoping to "prevent Russian excesses," urged that "our forces should occupy quickly as much of the industrial areas of Korea and Manchuria as we can."[18] The State Department, in the person of Secretary of State Byrnes, suggested that US forces "receive the surrender as far north as practicable."[19] It was decided that the 38th parallel was the northernmost line the Soviets would possibly accept, Korea was divided, and an American occupation was established in the south.[20]

Some analysts suggest that these were the first faint stirrings of the Cold War. Bruce Cumings argues that the shift in policy on Korea was the result of the growing influence of "the nationalists among FDR's advisors" following Truman's succession to the presidency; James Matray adds that these were the advisors "most dedicated to a policy of toughness toward the Soviet Union."[21] In their view Truman, emboldened by the successful testing of the atomic bomb, attempted to redefine previous arrangements to keep the Russians from attaining a position of dominance

in East Asian affairs, discarding trusteeship in favor of a direct role in shaping postwar Korea, a policy which Cumings labels "premature containment."[22] It does seems clear that the shift in Korea policy was based on Truman's application of European precedents to Asia, and that this represented a definite departure from Roosevelt's approach. The key point, however, is whether or not this represented a change in US perceptions of Korea's importance. Cumings asserts that Korea was "increasingly defined as essential to the security of the postwar Pacific," and Matray contends that concern over the strategic threat to China and Japan prompted US efforts to preclude Soviet control of the entire Korean peninsula.[23] Pelz, however, rejects this idea, and argues instead that the motivation for occupation was "to gain leverage for trusteeship negotiations;"[24] Truman was attempting to safeguard Korean trusteeship, in light of experiences with the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, by denying the Russians a dominant position in Korea. Gaddis also emphasizes denial as the bottom-line US objective:

> The decision to establish an American presence in Korea must be viewed in the same context as the decision, taken at the same time, to deny the Russians an occupation zone in Japan. Both were made in the light of experiences in Europe; both were intended to minimize the amount of territory in the Far East to come under Russian control. 25

The view that the occupation of Korea was undertaken primarily for global political as opposed to regional strategic reasons is buttressed by the fact that, in a

pattern that was to be repeated over the next five years, it was advocated by the State Department and opposed by the War Department.[26] The fundamental American perception of Korea had not changed.[27] The American goal was still to preclude domination of Korea by any outside power. What changed was the US perception of the basic trustworthiness of the Russians, which had been a key assumption of the earlier planning for initial Russian occupation of the entire peninsula. As such, the US involvement with Korea, from the very beginning, revolved around US-Soviet relations far more than any intrinsic value attributed to the Korean peninsula.

B. TRUSTEESHIP

Truman initially sought to continue Roosevelt's policy of seeking to cooperate with the Soviet Union, but the behavior of the Russians and the counsel of Truman's advisers led him to adopt a tougher, quid pro quo negotiating strategy.[28] In Korea, the US goal continued to be the creation of a trusteeship.[29] The initial directive on Korean occupation, SWNCC 176/8, approved on 13 October 1945, stated that the "ultimate objective of the United States with respect to Korea is to foster conditions which will bring about the establishment of a free and independent nation."[30] This policy was reviewed and confirmed by SWNCC 101/4, approved 24 October 1945; significantly, this document also concluded that no part of Korea should be

designated as a strategic area, which would have allowed retention of US forces. Instead, it was deemed advisable "to terminate military occupation as early as practicable."[31] But the advocates of a US position in Korea, chiefly the Office of Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department, saw Korea as a potential bargaining chip in dealings with the Soviets concerning China and Japan, and were reluctant to liquidate the US position there prematurely.[32]

The imaginary line of the 38th parallel, however, soon began to solidify into a very real barrier, calling into serious question the likelihood of Russian cooperation in the establishment of the kind of trusteeship envisioned in Washington. As a result, Korea was one of the major issues on the agenda when Secretary of State James Byrnes went to Moscow in December 1945. The resulting Moscow Agreement called for the establishment of a Joint Commission consisting of representatives of the two occupation commands to "assist the formation" of "a provisional Korean democratic government."[33] This commission was duly established, and held its first meeting in Seoul on 20 March 1946 to consider the trusteeship issue.[34]

Negotiations, however, quickly came to a standstill. In addition to the strong opposition of the Koreans in the south to the concept of trusteeship, it soon became apparent that the Russians had their own idea of what constituted a

democratic government, and were intent on "excluding all parties from participation in Korean Political life except the Communists."[35] The Americans, for their part, were equally unwilling to accept an outcome favorable to the Soviet Union.[36] The quid pro quo approach ultimately proved a failure, since the US did not have the ability to compel the Russians, by either sticks or carrots, to make the sweeping concessions desired in Washington.[37]

It was concluded that there was "not much hope for future accomplishment by the Commission," so it adjourned on 6 May 1946, and "negotiations looking toward the creation of a Provisional Korean Government came to a halt."[38] At the same time, the first cautious steps were taken toward the creation of a separate, pro-American government in the south, a policy which Hodge's Political Adviser, William Langdon, has advocated even before the Moscow Conference.[39] Exiled Korean leaders, including Syngman Rhee and Kim Ku, were allowed to return, but as individuals rather than as representatives of the Provisional Government. Nevertheless, those groups on the political right soon coalesced around Rhee and began to dominate Korean politics. When plans for the election of a legislative assembly were announced in July 1946, it was a clear that Rhee and his followers would prevail. The election was held from 17-22 October 1946, and, not surprisingly, no non-rightist candidates were victorious. To achieve a more

representative balance, the Military Governor appointed an equal number of moderates, but this step, which was never accepted by the right, foredoomed the fledgling assembly. In addition, the Military Government, despite statements to the contrary, never granted the assembly any substantive authority. As a result, the South Korean Interim Legislative Assembly, which convened 12 December 1946 and was formally in existence for eighteen months, accomplished very little of any significance.[40] Nevertheless, it was an early indication that the United States was prepared to create a separate state in the south.

While the concept of a trusteeship was not completely abandoned, it was apparent that any accomodation with the Soviet Union which would be acceptable to the United States would not be achieved merely through negotiation. Since both sides were concerned with the ultimate outcome rather than the process, and since the acceptable outcomes were diametrically opposed, no meaningful compromise was possible. But the United States was not yet ready to accept this. The State Department in particular still hoped to achieve unification as called for in the Moscow Agreement. The military in Washington was relatively indifferent, being concerned more with the drain of resources than the ultimate fate of Korea, but the military representatives in Korea were staunchly anti-Communist and determined to prevent a shift to the left. In practice, this meant that nothing was

done particularly well. Little progress was made toward the creation of a viable independent south Korea, since the occupation authorities were reluctant to take steps which might interfere with the hoped-for unification of the peninsula under a trusteeship.[41] But the military government, by consistently supporting rightist elements in Korea, simultaneously undermined any prospects of ever achieving this goal.

C. "PATIENCE AND FIRMNESS"

The failure of the Joint Commission to arrive at a formula for trusteeship was a reflection of the wholesale deterioration of relations between the US and the USSR. The United States initially believed that Russian actions were intended to guarantee the security of the Soviet Union, and were able to deal with the Kremlin on that basis, but Soviet actions in Europe, as well as developments in the international communist movement, convinced many American officials that the Soviets were committed to a program of virtually unlimited expansion which ultimately threatened the very survival of the United States.[42]

The period from late February to early March 1946 was the pivotal turning point in US-Soviet relations, marking the end of postwar cooperation and the beginning of confrontation. Various events and factors combined to induce this change. On 9 February 1946, Stalin delivered a

speech in Moscow stressing the fundamental incompatibility of communism and capitalism. This followed on the heels of the first Soviet veto in the Security Council, on a relatively minor matter clearly not vital to Soviet interests, an ominous sign for the future viability of the United Nations. Then, on 16 February 1946, news broke of an espionage ring in Canada which had stolen secret data on the atomic bomb for the Russians. These events provided ample ammunition for Republican attacks on administration foreign policy, which were reaching their peak intensity.[43]

The actions of the Soviet Union suggested that, contrary to the fundamental assumptions of both Roosevelt's policy of cooperation and Truman's quid pro quo approach, the Russians were impervious to external influences, and that their behavior could not be ameliorated by either threats or concessions on the part of the United States.[44] At this crucial juncture, George Kennan sent his famous "long telegram" from Moscow, in which he analyzed the motives behind Soviet policy and concluded that they were domestic in origin, related to the need of a repressive regime to construct an external threat in order to justify its own excesses. The effect in Washington was "nothing less than sensational."[45] In many ways, Kennan's telegram galvanized the changes which were underway in Washington's perception of the Russians, providing a new "intellectual framework" for analysis of Soviet foreign policy.[46] It was

a nucleus around which pre-existing forces coalesced. But it was an explanation of the Soviet problem, not a strategy for dealing with that problem. Kennan's arguments, however, were interpreted by those in power, who needed a concrete strategy, and resulted in a new US policy: "patience and firmness." Under this strategy, the US would no longer try to hide its disagreements with its erstwhile ally, it would cease making concessions to the Soviets, and it would rebuild its military power and provide economic and military assistance to strengthen allies.[47]

The first signs of the new American policy of firmness were oratorical: a speech by Byrnes on 28 February 1946, and Truman's implicit endorsement of Winston Churchill's 5 March 1946 speech at Fulton, Missouri, in which he coined the term "iron curtain." Washington confirmed the new policy, however, by its handling of the Iranian crisis. When the Soviets failed to remove their forces from Azerbaijan in accordance with wartime agreements, the US issued a series of increasingly firm protests, finally carrying the issue to the UN Security Council even after the Russians indicated a willingness to withdraw.[48]

This new policy was popular in the United States, but ran counter to the even more popular policies of military demobilization and the abolition of wartime taxes and economic controls.[49] US military strength plummeted from a high of 12 million at the end of World War II to 3 million

by July 1946, then fell further to only 1.6 million by the summer of 1947.[50] Ground forces shrank to only 670,000, with only a fraction of these combat ready.[51] Defense expenditures likewise plunged, falling from $81.6 billion in fiscal year 1945 to $44.7 in fiscal year 1946, and only $13.1 billion in fiscal year 1947.[52] This dissipation of military strength at the precise time that US commitments were being enlarged was a serious problem. It reflected, however, the widely held belief that defense spending could not exceed $15 billion without causing inflation.[53] The collapse of the American economy would be as deleterious to the national security as anything the Soviet Union could do; in fact, it was believed that the Soviets might be deliberately attempting to prompt excessive military expenditures for precisely that purpose.

D. HOLDING THE LINE IN KOREA

The growing disparity between resources and commitments exacerbated the natural rivalry of the military and diplomatic bureaucracies. While there were variations between individuals and over time, in general the State Department concerned itself with the political/ideological dimensions of a situation (the nonsituational view), while the military focused on the issue of strategic significance, which was defined primarily in terms of military value in the context of a global conflict with the Soviet Union (the

situational view). This led to a fundamental disagreement over the importance of Korea to US security which began within months, although it was not at first "fully or explicitly articulated."[54] The State Department view, however, clearly dominated US policy during the early part of the occupation, and continued to do so even after the apparent failure of the Joint Commission.

Nevertheless, the failure of negotiations forced the State Department to develop an alternative approach.[55] On 6 June 1946, less than a month after the Joint Commission adjourned, the State Department produced a very significant paper which redefined US policy on Korea.[56]

Far from advocating abandonment of Korea because of the failure to create a trusteeship, this paper actually expanded US interests. Korean independence was now seen as important from a global as well as a regional perspective. In the region, it was seen as "a means of strengthening political stability throughout the Far East," although Korea's role as a stabilizing influence was explicitly as an adjunct to China, which was still the central focus of American policy in East Asia, since

> the domination of Korea by either Japan or the Soviet Union would further endanger Chinese control of Manchuria and would thus lessen the prospect of the creation of a strong and stable China, without which there can be no permanent political stability in the Far East.

This was, however, merely an extension of the earlier US objective of precluding a Sino-Soviet contest in Korea. It

was in the global context that Korea assumed "added significance" as "part of the much more vital problem of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union."

Because of this significance, the United States clearly could not simply abandon Korea. But, since negotiation had proved ineffective, what could be done to achieve reunification under an acceptable trusteeship? The answer was the creation of a viable southern Korea which would by its very existence compel Soviet concessions:

> the way to resolve the present impasse in our favor would seem to be to adopt a course of action in southern Korea which would win such active popular support for United States principles and practices as to force the Soviet Union to modify its present stand and at the same time would make an understanding easier by developing common ground for agreement with the Soviet Union.

In essence, it was hoped that economic progress in the south would demonstrate to the Soviets that their policy of obstruction was doomed to failure, and force them to meet American demands, a clear example of patience with firmness. As John Hilldring, then serving as State Department representative to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), put it, "when our position in Korea has been strengthened . . . there will for the first time be reason to hope that the Soviets will be ready to make concessions and may even desire to initiate negotiations for an agreement acceptable to the United States."[57] To facilitate the accomplishment of this objective, the military occupation would be continued. This policy paper thus

contained two of the three elements of what Kim Chull Baum calls "a three-fold policy" for Korea: economic aid and a prolonged occupation.[58] The third, rejection of governmental level negotiations with the Soviets, soon followed, but was in essence an adjunct to the policy of strength by means of economic aid, since it was felt that a governmental approach at that juncture would have been interpreted by the Soviets as a sign of weakness.[59]

The idea that the successful development of the US occupation zone would somehow compel the Soviets to accede to American demands was not universally well received: Langdon called it "a mistaken notion."[60] The new policy received important support, however, when Edwin Pauley, who had earlier been one of those urging Truman to send US forces into Korea, wrote the President a letter in which he characterized Korea as "an ideological battleground upon which our entire success in Asia may depend." He recommended that the US "give greater technical assistance to Korea in the reconstruction of her industrial economy."[61] Responding to Pauley in July, Truman concluded that "Our commitments for the establishment of an independent Korea require that we stay in Korea long enough to see the job through and that we have adequate personnel and sufficient funds to do a good job."[62] Not incidentally, a program of economic aid, in addition to demonstrating American resolve to Moscow, would also show Congress, unhappy with

developments in China, that the administration was determined to meet America's commitments in Korea, without, however, enlarging those commitments beyond what was felt to be appropriate.[63]

The new approach was challenged in late 1946 by civil disorders in south Korea which highlighted the unpopularity of the occupation. These began with a railroad workers' strike on 22 September 1946, followed by a printers' strike and threats of strikes in other sectors. On 30 September violence erupted between police and the railroad strikers in Seoul, resulting in the death of two or three persons, as well as injuries to other strikers and to police. The next day a youth, rumored to be a student, was killed by police during a riot in Taegu. This touched off an attack on police headquarters, followed by an "orgy of destruction" directed at the police in numerous locations throughout the southeastern provinces. It was believed that these disruptions had been orchestrated by southern Communists, but they clearly tapped a wellspring of discontent over the rice shortage, high prices, the grain collection program which was alleged to have been administered "arbitrarily, unjustly, and corruptly" by the police, and the impending rice collection program.[64] Order was temporarily restored, but further violence erupted in October in the Kaesong area at the western end of the 38th parallel, on the southwestern outskirts of Seoul, and in the Mokpo-Naju area in

southwestern Korea. Police and government officials were attacked, and transportation and communication facilities were sabotaged, with numerous fatalities and injuries, as well as heavy damage to property. The authorities felt compelled to employ tactical troops, including tank patrols in Seoul, to maintain order. Reasons given for this renewed upheaval included hatred of the police, the presence of former Japanese collaborators in the military government, corruption, the unpopular program for collection and distribution of rice, inflation and high prices, the lack of progress toward economic recovery, and delay in creation of a Provisional Government. Attacks against police stations continued into November, primarily in South Cholla Province; on 4 November there was, for the first time, an "organized attack" on US troops.[65]

These upheavals, as well as the inability of the Korean authorities to control them without considerable assistance from US troops, highlighted the weakness of the American position in Korea. It was feared that a South Korean uprising, with or without North Korean involvement, would compel the weak US occupation forces to leave ignominiously, with disastrous consequences. Advocates of troop withdrawal were further strengthened by an informal Russian proposal for rapid withdrawal of all occupation forces, as well as reports that North Korean forces were being developed for an invasion of the south. Prompted by these developments, the

Army began to actively advocate an early withdrawal of US forces, urging that government-level diplomatic action between the US and USSR be pursued to resolve the Korean question. The Army position was enhanced by the lack of success of the "three-fold" approach, which eroded the influence of the State Department.[66]

In an attempt to resolve these differences, a Special Inter-Departmental Committee on Korea was established to prepare policy recommendations, and on 25 February 1947 it issued a draft report.[67] The committee found that the American position in Korea was indeed tenuous; in fact, it noted that "present conditions are deteriorating rather than improving," and expressed concern that the US position "might soon weaken to a point where it may become untenable." A governmental approach, however, was rejected in favor of a program for economic rehabilitation in Korea.[68]

Up to that point, the Occupation, under the Government Aid and Relief in Occupied Areas (GARIOA) program, had only provided "limited imports of food and other essentials to prevent disease and unrest." Intended as only an interim measure to keep things from getting worse, it was failing even at that; in a rather pithy observation, the committee observed that "No loaning agency could consider south Korea an acceptable risk." Nevertheless, the report rejected the option of simply abandoning south Korea, and, in accord with

the intentions expressed in Truman's earlier letter, recommended instead "an aggressive, positive, long-term program."[69]

In light of the altogether dismal condition of the South Korean economy, it was evident that this would not be a simple undertaking. The committee acknowledged this:

> In order to succeed, such a program must be supported by sufficient funds in the form of Congressional appropriations to finance the substantial political, economic and cultural measures required to bring about the economic rehabilitation of southern Korea and to prepare the country for early and complete independence.

It was estimated that $600 million would be required over three years, starting with $250 million in fiscal year 1948. This represented an increase of only $113 million over the $137 million previously requested for Korea under the War Department budget for occupied areas. Nevertheless, the report admitted that "the outlook for approval of this sum is not encouraging."[70] After further study and coordination, the State Department arrived at a three-year program totaling $540 million. This program was approved by the Bureau of the Budget, but was never presented to Congress.[71]

This report represented a significant turning point in US policy.[72] For the first time, US prestige throughout the world was explicitly linked to its performance in Korea. Abandonment of Korea in the face of Russian intransigence would be seen as "a complete political defeat in a test of

strength with the Soviet Union in the only area where we and the Soviets stand face to face alone." The effect of such a failure would go far beyond the physical loss of southern Korea: "The loss of U.S. prestige and influence, and the consequent increase in Soviet influence and power, would have prejudicial repercussions not only on U.S. interests in the Far East but on the entire U.S. world position."[73]

This position was further elaborated in the 31 March report of the committee:

> Korea's principal political importance to the US is perhaps the effect of developments there on the whole cause of Soviet-US relations. It is important that there be no gaps or weakening in our policy of firmness in containing the USSR because weakness in one area is invariably interpreted by the Soviets as indicative of an overall softening. A backing down or running away from the USSR in Korea could easily result in a stiffening of the Soviet attitude on Germany or some other area of much greater intrinsic importance to us. On the other hand, a firm "holding of the line" in Korea can materially strengthen our position in our other dealings with the USSR. 74

This reflected the growing weight which policymakers in Washington were attaching to perceptions. Korea was evolving into a symbol of American determination to "hold the line" against the Soviet Union in East Asia.

Ultimately, the Interdepartmental Committee did not resolve the conflict between the views of the Army and the State Department. The 25 February report was a compromise document, with wording supportive of both positions; as Kim observes, "Disagreements about withdrawal were side-stepped with balanced or contradicting statements . . ." The continued dominance of the State Department, though, despite

some gains by the military, was demonstrated by the rejection of abandonment of South Korea, and an implied commitment to continue the occupation for three more years, the length of the proposed economic aid program.[75]

E. THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE

The proposed program to create of a strong democratic regime in South Korea represented a substantial investment of US resources, and the report itself was far from sanguine in its evaluation of the prospects for obtaining these resources. On 3 January 1947 the 80th Congress had convened with Republican majorities in both houses, the first time in fourteen years that the Republicans had controlled Congress. One of their prime goals was to reduce the size of the Federal budget. Chances seemed to improve in March, though, when the President, in response to a crisis in Greece, promulgated the Truman Doctrine and requested aid for Greece and Turkey. Truman announced his belief that "it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."[76]

Despite the rhetoric, however, the Truman Doctrine as understood by the Truman administration was merely a logical extension of the traditional US policy of preventing domination of Europe by any single power, and as such was very definitely a European policy. The rhetoric was

misleading; Acheson assured the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that aid to Greece and Turkey would not set a precedent.[77] The United States had neither the desire nor the resources to oppose communism throughout the world.[78]

In order to obtain the resources required to stave off the Soviet Union in Greece and Turkey, though, the President employed sweeping language which implied a virtually open-ended commitment to all non-Communist regimes everywhere, the very essence of the non-situational approach. The announcement of the Truman Doctrine was a deliberate effort to educate the American people to the realities of the postwar world: leadership did not come without responsibilities.[79] This effort to bridge the gap between commitments and resources, however, was hampered by the fundamental nature of American foreign policy. As Charles Osgood observes,

> We have almost instinctively pursued limited political ends and limited military means in response to specific threats; but we have been disposed to talk - and in large measure to think - in terms of policies free from such frustrating limitations.

So, from the very start, the administration's policy, which in reality was a very pragmatic pursuit of American geopolitical interests in Europe, was couched in idealistic, universal terms as a battle between contending ideologies, a struggle between the forces of good and evil, in order to 'sell the program' to the public and to Congress.[80] Rather

than simply ask for money to protect US interests in Greece and Turkey, Truman pontificated.

Kennan took particular exception to this aspect of the Truman Doctrine, arguing that the national interest might at times require the abandonment of democratic regimes, or aid to governments, such as that of Greece, whose people were somewhat less than free.[81] The very first study produced by the new Policy Planning Staff under Kennan contained a scathing critique of the Truman Doctrine. It excoriated the idea that the doctrine was "a blank check to give economic and military aid to any area in the world where the communists show signs of being successful." Given the limited resources available to the United States, the decision to provide aid was "essentially a question of political economy in the literal sense" and would be considered "only in cases where the productive results bear a satisfactory relationship to the expenditure of American resources and effort."[82]

While the rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine may initially have been just a tactic, it was not without impact. It encouraged a simplistic view of the Cold War which in turn restricted US flexibility in responding to subsequent crises, imprisoning American diplomacy in an "ideological straitjacket."[83]

F. FAILURE OF KOREAN AID

On 5 June 1947, Secretary of State Marshall gave a speech at Harvard calling for the rehabilitation of Europe, the proposal which gave birth to the Marshall Plan. Following Truman's request for aid to Greece and Turkey, this proposal made it impossible to go to Congress with a request for aid to Korea on top of everything else.[84] The issue was settled when, on 27 June, Senator Arthur Vandenburg informed Undersecretary of State Acheson that the Republicans would oppose any new authorizations for foreign assistance during the remainder of that congressional term.[85]

The net result of all the bureaucratic battling, then, was a hardening of the respective Army and State positions, each side appearing to compromise, but in reality emphasizing its own point of view. Both agreed that the US position in Korea was deteriorating, but they disagreed fundamentally on how best to respond to this development. The State Department favored a strengthened commitment as a basis for the successful pursuit of US objectives, whereas the military favored a rapid disengagement and withdrawal.[86] The State Department view prevailed at first, but it was fatally undermined when Congress proved unwilling to fund the economic aid program. Unfortunately, what this meant in practice was that the political commitment to Korea began to grow without a corresponding commitment of the resources

required to make the US position in Korea viable. The gap between resources and commitments which characterized US foreign policy as a whole became especially acute with regard to Korea, with those organizations which disposed of resources--the military and especially the Congress--avoiding a commitment, and the one organization which favored a commitment--the State Department--having no resources with which to pursue its policy.

III. CONTAINMENT

A. CONTAINMENT ACCORDING TO KENNAN

The failure to provide substantial aid to South Korea seemed inconsistent with the rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine, but it was completely in line with the emerging strategy of containment. Its principal architect, George Kennan, believed that American resources were limited and that any viable long-term strategy for dealing with the Soviet threat had to recognize this; in seeking to contain the Soviet Union, the US had to exercise care and good judgement, "to avoid permanently impairing our economy and the fundamental values and institutions inherent in our way of life."[87] Kennan attempted to address the gap between resources and commitments with his concept of containment. Whereas previous strategies for dealing with the Soviet threat had tended to expand American commitments, however, Kennan sought to limit US interests to fit the available means.[88]

The authoritative public statement of this doctrine, unfortunately, was "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," in which Kennan argued that "the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian

expansive tendencies."[89] Containment was plagued by misunderstanding almost from the start: Walter Lippmann attacked containment as "a strategic monstrosity," criticizing it for precisely those deficiencies in the Truman Doctrine to which Kennan had objected most vehemently.[90] Kennan realized that his article, which had never been intended to be the public statement of American policy which it became, was indeed marred by "serious deficiencies," but his official position with the State Department prevented him from correcting these misunderstandings.[91]

Kennan's own views on containment were considerably more complex than the public understanding of the concept, and indeed did not so much emerge full blown as evolve in response to events. Nevertheless, his thinking was fairly consistent and mirrored official US policy from 1947 through 1949.[92]

He distinguished two main tendencies in US foreign policy: the universalistic approach, and the particularized approach. The former tried to develop universal rules and procedures to govern international relations, and tended to be legalistic and mechanical; its clearest mainfestation in the postwar period was the United Nations. The latter, on the other hand, proceeded from a pessimism about the chances of success for universalism, and assumed that power and considerations of mutual interest still dominated

international affairs. Kennan saw US foreign policy as "a dual policy" combining both methods, but he decried universalism as essentially escapist; he believed that it resulted in "a great dispersal" of American efforts. Instead of trying to remake the world in its own image, the US should be content with leading "the older, mellower, and more advance nations of the world," for whom order was more important than mere power, and upon whom any hope for the future rested.[93]

Based on these views, Kennan did not believe that the United States could, or even should, challenge the Soviets at every point, a position he had made clear in his objection to the universalist rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine. Limited resources demanded that interests be prioritized; trying to be strong everywhere ran the risk of being weak everywhere, and handed the initiative to the Soviet Union.[94] Kennan differentiated between vital and peripheral interests, his principal criteria being industrial-military capacity, raw materials and secure lines of communications. By this definition, there were only five regions in the world which were vital: the United States, the United Kingdom, the Rhine valley and its adjacent industrial areas, the Soviet Union and Japan. Since only the Soviet Union was hostile to the US, the task clearly was to prevent the expansion of Russian influence to other vital areas. Selected nations located near these vital areas had

to be protected as well, but only after considering three criteria necessary for the extension of US aid: the presence or absence of reasonably viable local forces of resistance, the importance of the area to US security, and the balance between probable costs and expected results.[95]

Since the threat was defined as Russian control, a distinction could be made between the Soviet Union and communism. Kennan saw the threat to US security as Russian expansionism as opposed to communist ideology. Communist regimes were a threat to the US only to the extent that they were controlled by the Kremlin. The victory of a communist revolutionary movement, therefore, while it was unfortunate, perhaps even tragic, did not necessarily represent a threat to US security. Kennan believed that Moscow's policies, which he perceived to be imperialistic, contained the seeds of their own destruction. "Stalinist dogma" was most appealing to non-Russian communists when they were revolutionaries in need of Soviet support, but once they came into power their interests would inevitably diverge from those of Moscow and come into conflict with the Kremlin's "colonial policy." The US could not, at least in the near term, hope to spread democracy to countries where it was "alien to their culture and tradition," since this would only result in "an indefinitely continuing burden of political, economic and military responsibility for the survival of the uncertain regimes which we had placed in

power." Instead, the best approach would be to promote "Communist heresy," relying on the force of nationalism to create non-Stalinist regimes, even if they were communist. The objective was not the eradication of communism but the elimination of "satellite subservience" to Moscow.[96]

Finally, Kennan believed the Soviet threat to be largely psychological, essentially a crisis of confidence. The Soviet Union pursued its goal of world domination by means of "aggressive pressure from without and militant revolutionary subversion from within," but neither wanted nor expected another war.[97] What was required to meet this threat, therefore, was "not the containment by military means of a military threat, but the political containment of a political threat."[98]

Kennan was particularly pessimistic about American chances of effecting developments in Asia. Although he predicted that American success in stopping the Soviets in Europe would cause them to turn to Asia, he felt that the region was "in a state of almost total instability," and that the "enormous" task of bringing "order out of chaos" was probably beyond the capacity of the US.[99] American ideas and institutions had little relevance for the Asian masses, who were far more likely to be attracted by the blandishments of communist ideology. Because of this, he predicted that it was "not only possible, but probable, that . . . many peoples will fall, for varying periods, under the

influence of Moscow." This was "probably unavoidable;" rather than indulge in "sentimentality and day-dreaming" about "unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization," the US needed to evaluate the region to determine which areas were absolutely essential to its security. If American control of these areas could be assured, there would be "no serious threat to our security from the East within our time."[100]

In differentiating between vital and peripheral interests, the Asian mainland was clearly peripheral; the loss of the countries bordering the Soviet Union from Afghanistan to Korea would be regrettable, but would not immediately endanger American security.[101] This understanding formed the basis for a situational approach to US commitments in Asia, an approach by which Korea was clearly peripheral and ultimately expendable. At the same time, however, there were countervailing forces in Washington who argued for a nonsituational approach. These forces, centered in the State Department, were initially dominant, and succeeded in extending the American occupation of Korea.

B. THE DEBATE OVER SIGNIFICANCE

The main point of contention was the importance of Korea to US security. This disagreement had surfaced in earlier debates on US policy in Korea, but it intensified following

the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, in large part due to the Army's growing concern over the gap between available strength and potential commitments. The War Department was attempting to bring the costly and troublesome occupation in Korea to an early end. In a SWNCC meeting on 29 January 1947, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson had characterized Korea as "the single most urgent problem now facing the War Department."[102] Occupation costs were more than $1 million per day, a considerable sum considering the draconian cuts which had been made in the defense budget.[103]

Immediately following the release of the Interdepartmental Committee's draft report, Assistant Secretary of War Howard Peterson began to openly and actively advocate withdrawal, arguing basically that the US should 'get out while the getting is good'.[104] In a 4 April 1947 letter to Dean Acheson, then Acting Secretary of State, Secretary Patterson expressed his concern over the "potentially explosive" situation in Korea, which he called "the most difficult occupation area to maintain," and reiterated the military's fear of a "precipitate withdrawal under conditions gravely detrimental to our position in the Far East and in the world." He rejected the State Department approach, questioning the willingness of Congress to appropriate the considerable funds proposed for Korean rehabilitation, and arguing that, even if these funds were made available, no program, "no matter how enlightened,"

would "satisfy the intense Korean desire for independence." Since "decreasing funds and manpower" would force the Army to drop "the least remunerative" of its programs, a categorization which Patterson clearly applied to Korea, he advocated a rapid disengagement: "I am convinced that the United States should pursue forcefully a course of action whereby we get out of Korea at an early date and believe all our measures should have early withdrawal as their overriding objective."[105]

The War Department position was fully articulated in JCS 1769/1, a 29 April 1947 report by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC). Evaluating assistance to other countries from the standpoint of national security, Korea was rated fourth out of fifteen in terms of need, but second to last in terms of importance to US national security. The report acknowledged the issue of US prestige in Korea, noting that it was "the one country within which we alone have for almost two years carried on ideological warfare in direct contact with our opponents," and agreeing that the loss of Korea to the Russians would be "gravely detrimental to United States prestige, and therefore security, throughout the world." Abandoning the struggle in Korea "would tend to confirm the suspicion that the United States is not really determined to accept the responsibilities of world leadership," and this perception would hamper US efforts "to bolster those countries of western Europe which are of

primary and vital importance to our national security." Having stated what was in essence the State Department position, though, the report went on to refute it. It argued that doubts about US resolve "could quite possibly be dissipated," and that US prestige in Europe could in fact be "enhanced," if "abandonment of further aid to Korea" was justified as a reprogramming of limited resources to "areas of greater strategic importance." It was concluded that "current assistance should be given to Korea only if the means exist after sufficient assistance has been given the countries of primary importance . . ." While the United States could not afford to lose Korea to the Soviets, it could actually gain by announcing that Korea was not important, and simply walking away. Instead of Korea, the report advocated aid to Japan, which it called "the most important arena of ideological struggle within our Pacific area of defense commitments."[106]

At a 7 May 1947 SWNCC meeting, Patterson reiterated the War Department position, stressing the expense of continued occupation and "the insignificance of the strategic and economic value of Korea." Secretary of State George Marshall disagreed with Patterson.[107] Instead of abandoning Korea, the State Department once again sought to negotiate with the Soviets to achieve the objectives of the Moscow Agreement. The Russians agreed, and the Joint Commission, adjourned since May 1946, met in Seoul on 22 May 1947.[108]

The Soviets, however, soon made it apparent that they were still determined to exclude rightist elements from participating in the creation of a Korean government, and the talks became deadlocked by 2 July.

The stalemate in the Joint Commission, capping as it did an almost total lack of progress on the part of the US occupation toward the creation of an independent Korean government, resulted in a further deterioration of the political situation in Korea, with little prospect for improvement in the forseeable future. The Russians would not negotiate, the Congress would not provide the resources required to create a viable state in southern Korea, and the Army simply wanted to get out. Joseph Jacobs, the new Political Adviser in Korea, concluded that what was required was a "major reorientation of United States policy with respect to Korea."[109] SWNCC appointed an Ad Hoc Committee, consisting of John Allison from the State Department, Lieutenant Colonel T.N. Dupuy from the War Department, and Captain H.R. Hummer from the Navy Department, to study and report on the situation in Korea.[110]

The 4 August 1947 report of this Ad Hoc Committee, labeled SWNCC 176/30, was a further significant evolution of US policy toward Korea.[111] While it repeated the familiar arguments concerning US prestige, and reaffirmed that the United States could not withdraw from Korea, it moved official policy closer to the War Department position:

"Every effort should be made . . . to liquidate or reduce the U.S. commitment of men and money in Korea as soon as possible without abandoning Korea to Soviet domination." In a twist on the earlier War Department argument, it added that "serious internal disorders" in Korea might lead the American public to "require the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea," an outcome which would "almost certainly result in the complete domination of Korea by the Soviet Union, with grave consequences to U.S. prestige and world-wide political objectives."[112] While the US could not simply leave under present circumstances, its objective now would be to change those circumstances so that withdrawal would be possible, a sort of 'constructive disengagement'. This was clearly less ambitious than the previous proposal to develop South Korea into a compelling showpiece of democracy and capitalism at work in Asia, but, in light of the administration failure to sell this approach to the Congress, there seemed little alternative.

There were three elements to the new policy. First, if the Joint Commission negotiations continued to be stalemated, the United States would submit the Korean problem to the United Nations at the beginning of the next General Assembly session on 16 September. Second, the possibility of abandoning the long-time objective of reunification under a trusteeship was finally accepted: "the U.S. government must be prepared for the possible necessity

of granting independence to south Korea." Finally, the report called for submission of Grant-in-Aid legislation to the next session of Congress; economic assistance was now seen explicitly as a concomitant of disengagement.[113]

There was further movement toward disengagement during the next few months, abetted in part by a significant change in personnel at the State Department. In rapid succession, Dean Acheson was replaced as Undersecretary of State by Robert A. Lovett, John Carter Vincent turned over his post as Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs to W. Walton Butterworth, and John H. Hilldring was replaced by Charles E. Saltzman as Assistant Secretary of State for Occupied Areas.[114] As a result, there was a temporary lack of continuity in the State Department's handling of the Korea issue, and a corresponding ferment in policy discussions. At the same time, George Kennan, as head of the new Policy Planning Staff, began to exert a substantial influence on the formulation of US foreign policy.

The extent of the growing consensus to get out of Korea was illustrated by a 9 September 1947 memo from Francis B. Stevens, Assistant Chief of the Division of Eastern European Affairs, to Kennan and Allison, the Assistant Chief of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs. Stevens expressed his concern about what he perceived to be "a fairly unanimous agreement to abandon the Koreans to their fate," arguing that this might be "a rather short-sighted policy from the

standpoint of our long-range interests." He advocated the global importance of such an act in the context of the "ideological struggle between East and West," stating that "individual political acts may have an importance far beyond their immediate local consequences," the essence of the nonsituational approach.[115]

The most forceful counterargument, surprisingly, was made from Korea by Jacobs. In a 19 September 1947 cable in which he analyzed Korea policy, Jacobs stated that, while he agreed that the failure of the Joint Commission required a new approach, he could not concur with the policy outlined in SWNCC 176/30, which would establish a "more or less permanent government in South Korea," without taking into account "the carefully studied answer of United States military strategists" to one key qestion: "is Korea of sufficiently vital importance [to] the United States in its relations with the Soviet Union within the forseeable future (for the next 5 years) for the United States to undertake the risk and expense of holding South Korea?" If the answer was yes, the United States should proceed with all haste to create a viable South Korea; in a prescient observation, Jacobs argued that there would be a cost for pursuing this course of action: "the United States would probably be compelled . . . to station along the 38th parallel more or less permanently at least 1 division of well-trained American troops . . . and we should have to train and equip

a South Korean Army of considerable size." If, on the other hand, the answer to the question was no, the United States should reconcile its differences with the Soviet Union and "get out of Korea as quickly and as gracefully as possible." Jacobs acknowledged that "there are those who will criticize this plan because the United States may lose "prestige" among Far Eastern peoples," but, as the JSSC had earlier, he rejected this argument, though for a different reason which reflected his own perspective: "any plan devised for uniting Korea and for withdrawal of troops will be readily accepted by the Koreans who seem to be willing to take the risks involved." Finally, and most profoundly, he questioned the ability of the United States to create 'democracy' in South Korea without the willing acquiescence of the Koreans themselves:

> we cannot give democracy, as we know it, to any people or cram it down their throats. History cries loudly that the fruits of democracy come forth only after long evolutionary and revolutionary processes involving the expenditure of treasure, blood and tears. Money cannot buy it; outside force and pressure cannot nurture it. 116

Jacobs argument demonstrates the extent to which the State Department had moved toward the Army perspective, prompted in part by the clear hopelessness of negotiations in the Joint Commission, and in part by continuing opposition and unrest in South Korea. They also demonstrate the impact of the new strategy of containment. The American commitment in Korea was being evaluated, in light of limited

resources, in terms of its military value to the US in its confrontation with the Soviet Union. The political value of creating democracy in Korea was discounted because of the low probability, painfully apparent to someone as close to the scene as Jacobs was, of succeeding in such an undertaking. Jacobs, however, went even farther than SWNCC 176/30 by suggesting that, if the US was not prepared to commit the resources necessary to hold South Korea, it should simply walk away and leave the Koreans to settle their own problems, an opportunity which all parties then seemed eager to have. He correctly foresaw the implicit commitment inherent in any American effort to create a separate state in its zone of occupation.

A third document from this period deserves mention, if for no other reason than its surprising lack of impact on Korea policy. This was the report to the President by Lieutenant General Albert Wedemeyer on the situation in China and Korea. Wedemeyer , toured Northeast Asia and presented his report on 19 September, at the height of the discussions on Korea. He concluded that the withdrawal of US forces would result in "the creation of a Soviet satellite Communist regime in all of Korea," and that this outcome "would cost the United States an immense loss in moral prestige among the people of Asia," and result in a corresponding gain in prestige for the Soviets, especially in those areas bordering the Soviet Union. Specifically, he

feared that there would be "serious repurcussions" in Japan.[117] But Wedemeyer's concerns did little to slow the building momentum in favor of withdrawal.

A factor which was far more significant, if not decisive, was the brief involvement of George Kennan in the formulation of Korea policy. Despite his disavowal of any role in the formulation of Korea policy prior to the Korean War, the large scale personnel turnover in State referred to above created a temporary void into which Kennan stepped. His influence appears to have been largely responsible for the sudden shift in the State Department position at the end of September 1947.[118] The Army position was certainly more akin to Kennan's views on containment than those previously espoused by the State Department to justify a continued US presence in Korea. Kennan wrote a memo to Butterworth on 24 September 1947 in which he outlined the position of the Policy Planning Staff (PPS) on Korea. Based on the understanding that Korea was not "militarily essential," Kennan recommended that US policy should be "to cut our losses and get out of there as gracefully but promptly as possible."[119] Two weeks later, in PPS 13, Kennan made it clear that there was also another reason for getting out of Korea. Not only did it lack direct military significance, but the prospects of success there were dim. Because Korean politics were "dominated by political immaturity, intolerance and violence," there was "no longer any real

hope of a genuinely peaceful and free democratic development" in Korea. The US could not rely on the Koreans themselves for support in creating the conditions of stability required to stop the spread of Soviet influence, a key criteria for the extension of US aid. Since Korea was also not "of decisive strategic importance," America's "main task" should be "to extricate ourselves without too great a loss of prestige."[120]

Consideration of Korea's strategic importance was clearly central to the entire argument. On this issue, though, the military occupied an unassailable position. The State Department, while it might contend that a continued US presence was needed for political reasons, could not contest the professional judgement of the military on a strictly military issue. At this critical juncture, on 26 September, the Joint Chiefs delivered their definitive judgement on Korea from the military perspective: "from the standpoint of military security, the United States has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea . . ." They argued that the US forces in Korea were not strong enough to make any significant contribution in the event of a war, and in any event would not be necessary, since any offensive operation would probably bypass Korea, and the peninsula could be most effectively denied to the enemy by air forces based elsewhere. They also reiterated their concern about the tenuousness of the US military

position in Korea in the event of severe internal disorder. Their bottom line was that, considering "the present severe shortage of military manpower," the troops in Korea, as well as the money spent there, "could well be used elsewhere."[121] It was the confluence of these three factors - growing US responsibilities elsewhere in the world, reduced resources available to meet these commitments, and continuing disorder in South Korea - that caused the Joint Chiefs to make their declaration.[122] The last factor, though, in causing the State Department to reevaluate the likelihood of success in Korea, may very well have tipped the balance.

The issue was taken up at a high-level State Department meeting on 29 September, attended by Marshall, Lovett, Kennan, Butterworth, Rusk and Allison. In a major departure from the earlier State Department position, it was agreed that "ultimately the US position in Korea is untenable even with the expenditure of considerable US money and effort," and that therefore "it should be the effort of the Government through all proper means to effect a settlement of the Korean problem which would enable the US to withdraw from Korea as soon as possible with the minimum of bad effects." Part of this process was submission of the Korea question to the United Nations.[123] The debate between 'holding the line' all along the Soviet periphery versus applying the containment strategy as Kennan envisioned it, concentrating limited resources on the areas which were

truly vital to US security, seemed to be finally settled, and the way was clear for the withdrawal of US forces.

Many analysts interpret the Truman administration's decision to refer the Korean problem to the UN as an indication of its desire to cast aside an unwanted burden. Gregory Henderson, for example, labels the whole policy "a smokescreen" behind which the United States planned to abandon "a fragile, complex and tangential Korea."[124] Matray disagrees, arguing that the involvement of the international community was "an essential part of Truman's containment strategy in Korea." In his view, the imprimatur of the UN was intended to convey added legitimacy to the South Korean government which it appeared increasingly likely would have to be created, and prompt Congress to provide the funds required for aid and rehabilitation.[125] It seems clear, though, that containment excluded Korea. Far from wanting to sink more resources into an area which had been determined to be peripheral and not very promising, the US was seeking to liquidate an unwise investment. This is not to say that US efforts to help South Korea were entirely cynical. There was definitely a sincere intent to create as viable a state in South Korea as was deemed possible under the circumstances. But this objective was not the result of altruism; the goal was to minimize US losses. This was a limited goal, and it would only warrant

the commitment of equally limited resources. Policy makers were starting to look beyond the Korean tangle. While the United States wasn't willing to leave Korea just yet, it was definitely starting to look for an exit.

C. DELAY OF WITHDRAWAL

Almost as soon as the State Department signed on in support of withdrawal, however, it began to backtrack, renewing its arguments on the geopolitical importance of Korea and attempting to delay withdrawal while concurrently pursuing an approach to the UN in an attempt to salvage as much as possible of the original US goals in Korea.[126] Secretary of State Marshall put the issue of Korean independence before the United Nations in an address to the General Assembly on 17 September 1947; in a resolution on 14 November, the General Assembly, based on a US proposal, established the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), and called for elections not later than 31 March 1948

> to choose representatives with whom the Commission may consult regarding the prompt attainment of the freedom and independence of the Korean people and which representatives, constituting a National Assembly, may establish a National Government of Korea.

The resolution also recommended that the new National Government should "arrange with the occupying Powers for the complete withdrawal from Korea of their armed forces as early as practicable and if possible within ninety days,"

language to which the military was to refer repeatedly in its dispute with the State Department over withdrawal.[127]

UNTCOK held its first meeting at Seoul on 12 January 1948, but was refused permission to enter North Korea by the Soviet Commander. In a 17 February memo, Niles Bond, the Assistant Chief of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs, expressed concern that "those who oppose the withdrawal of US occupation forces" might construe this development as rendering the UN resolution "inoperative," and, in an early indication of the resurgence of State Department advocacy of continued occupation, argued that the State Department "should at least be giving some thought to the possibility that we may be obliged to persuade the Army to keep its powder dry so far as withdrawal is concerned, and to stand pat in South Korea at least until the next session of the GA [General Assembly]."[128] Bond's concerns did not, however, prove warranted; on 26 February the Interim Committee of the General Assembly adopted a US-sponsored resolution instructing UNTCOK to proceed with elections in those parts of Korea to which it had access.[129]

Nevertheless, the State Department, moving a little further along the path which Bond had blazed, began to reconsider its earlier support of the Army's withdrawal plans. In a 4 March 1948 memo, Butterworth observed that while the United States was committed to withdrawal under the 14 November 1947 UN resolution, it was also "morally

committed . . .to withdraw only after the creation of reasonably adequate security forces, and under circumstances which will bequeath to the newly established government at least an even chance of survival." He argued that, because of this, a firm timetable for withdrawal could not be established; the US had to create a viable economy and adequate security forces in South Korea before it could pull out its troops. He made three specific recommendations, all of which affected the Army: he called on the Army to "maintain flexibility in its plans for the withdrawal of occupation forces from South Korea," urged the Army to "expedite to the fullest extent possible its program for the training and equipping of South Korean security forces," and, in the biggest slap to the military, recommended that "the necessary legislative steps be taken to assure the continued availability of Army funds for the relief and rehabilitation of south Korea after the withdrawal of U.S. occupation forces."[130] This last point must have been especially galling to the Army, which after all was interested in getting out of Korea in large part to free limited resources for use elsewhere.

This renewed divergence between the State Department and Army positions on Korea led to the creation of a compromise document, NSC 8, produced by the newly created National Security Council and adopted at its ninth meeting on 2 April. The fact that it was a compromise is critical in

understanding NSC 8, which Kim calls "two contradictory documents in one." Both the Army and the State Department succeeded in inserting sections supporting their positions; in the bureaucratic struggle which followed, each side appealed selectively to those provisions.[131]

NSC 8 started with a restatement of US objectives in Korea, but it added a new "derivative objective": "terminating the military commitment of the U.S. in Korea as soon as practicable" consistent with the other objectives. The military thereby received support for withdrawal, but the State Department had one important caveat: withdrawal would not be at the expense of the basic objectives.[132]

The report went on to provide a rather gloomy estimate of the US position in Korea. The effort to create a democratic government in Korea was "handicapped by the political immaturity of the Korean people," especially their tendency "to polarize into extremes of right and left and to pursue their ends through the use of violence." The Korean economy was if anything even worse: "it is estimated that economic collapse would ensue in south Korea within a matter of weeks after the termination of U.S. aid to that area."

Despite these difficulties, however, the United States could not allow the Soviets to dominate the entire Korean peninsula. This would "enhance the political and strategic position" of the USSR in the region, at the expense of the US positions in China and Japan. Withdrawal might also "be

interpreted as a betrayal by the U.S. of its friends and allies in the Far East and might well lead to a fundamental realignment of forces in favor of the Soviet Union throughout that part of the world." This was the standard argument, but a significant new twist was added: this outcome could be avoided if "the U.S., upon withdrawal, left sufficient indigenous military strength to enable south Korea to defend itself against any but an overt act of aggression." Finally, reflecting the new importance of Korea as a test of the United Nations, it was pointed out that overthrow of the South Korean government created under the auspices of the UN would "constitute a severe blow to the prestige and influence of the UN."

Based on these considerations, the US had three possible course of action: abandon Korea, establish a viable government in South Korea as a means of liquidating the US commitment, or guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of Korea against both internal and external threats. In the best tradition of bureaucratic decision-making, the desired course of action was sandwiched between two obviously unacceptable extremes. Not surprisingly, the middle option was selected, and the report recommended that the United States "effect a settlement of the Korean problem which would enable the U.S. to withdraw from Korea as soon as possible with the minimum of bad effects." At first glance this seemed to be the same

position adopted in September, but a renewed emphasis was being placed on the creation of stable conditions in Korea prior to US withdrawal.

In order to create conditions which would make withdrawal acceptable, it was concluded that the US should expedite plans for developing the South Korean constabulary into a security force, and complete the planned GARIOA and rehabilitation plans for fiscal year 1949 "to aid in forestalling the economic collapse of south Korea," a modest enough goal. These efforts were to be geared to the creation of conditions for withdrawal by 31 December 1948. Finally, there was a word of caution which seems quite ironic in light of subsequent developments: "The U.S. should not become so irrevocably involved in the Korean situation that any action taken by any faction in Korea or by any other power in Korea could be considered a casus belli for the U.S."

The two distinct lines of reasoning in NSC 8 make it a difficult document on which to base any conclusions about US policy, except perhaps to say that, inasmuch as the basic conflict between the military and diplomatic views had not been resolved, there was no clear policy. The report seems to say that Korea is important--the State Department view--but that the US should get out anyway--the Army view. The compromise seems to be on the process: the US will withdraw its forces, but only after creating conditions in South

Korea which will give the Koreans a fighting chance at survival after withdrawal. The implication is that the ultimate fate of Korea is not as important as the perception among allies and opponents alike that Korea was not simply abandoned by the United States.

Matray disagrees with this interpretation, arguing instead that "Truman's approval of NSC 8 was indicative of his desire to pursue a middle road in responding to the Soviet challenge in Korea."[133] But it seems just as reasonable to see his approval as the act of an indecisive President taking the middle road between the positions of the two dominant bureaucracies in the government. Pelz sees the decision to withdraw and turn the problem over to the UN as another example of satisficing. He argues that, by withdrawing the occupation forces, the US terminated its real commitment to Korea, but maintained "a primarily verbal commitment" to please the State Department. The result, a commitment based on "words and limited aid, but not deeds", was what he calls "a policy of bluff".[134] The middle road, providing economic and political support for those nations on the periphery of the Soviet bloc which were deemed important but not sufficiently vital to the US to justify a military commitment, was credible only so long as the Soviets did not call the US bluff.

Matray, however, contends that the administration really believed that this approach would work. In his view,

> Truman and his advisers were optimistic about the prospects for successful containment in Korea. The economic recovery and political stability the Koreans could achieve with American aid and advice would frustrate the Soviet strategy of expansion. South Korea would emerge as a viable, democratic Asian nation capable of self-defense and worthy of emulation. 135

This contention, however, seems inconsistent with the rather pessimistic assessment of the Korean situation contained in NSC 8, as well as the overall tone of the document, which seems to accept the possibility of a collapse in South Korea so long as it is not tied too closely to the US withdrawal. At any rate, the real issue is the lack of any apparent planning for the contingency of failure. While the Truman administration may have sincerely believed that its policy of assistance to South Korea could succeed in the absence of a military threat, the proper US response in the event of such a threat, however unlikely, does not appear to have been thought through. This omission reflects the unsettled nature of US Korea policy: even after years of debate, the fundamental dispute between the nonsituational and situational views remained unresolved. The resultant US policy was the product of an uneasy compromise.

D. THE ARMY PUSH

The Army had no doubts; from its perspective, nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of the rapid execution of the agreed troop withdrawal. It did not really share the State Department's concern with the intangible political

consequences, and was consequently far less interested in achieving political objectives which could only delay withdrawal and consume scarce resources which the Army had long since concluded were more urgently needed elsewhere. This position was, if anything, strengthened by events in early 1948. When, on 12 January 1948, Truman presented to Congress his budget request for fiscal year 1948, defense was allocated only $11 billion. The Army was budgeted 560,000 men, but by the end of March it was 22,000 below that figure due to low enlistments.[136]

These force levels were dangerously low in light of potential commitments. At an 18 February White House meeting, Major General Alfred M. Gruenther, the Director of the Joint Staff of the JCS, stated that if a commitment of military forces were made in any of "the possible explosive points in the world," which he identified as Greece, Italy, Korea and Palestine, US reserves would be reduced to "a dangerous degree." Use of more than a division in any area would require partial mobilization.[137] The military's worries were heightened by the crisis of March 1948, precipitated by the twin shocks of the Soviet coup in Czechoslovakia and the beginning of the Berlin blockade, but in reality the result of concern over the lack of success of US efforts in Greece and Turkey, the growing momentum of the Communists in China, and the problem in Palestine.[138]

These developments intensified the Army's previous reluctance to accept any delay in liquidating the position in Korea. Army Undersecretary William H. Draper clearly conveyed this message in a 3 May 1948 missive to Lovett in which he complained about the activities of UNTCOK in Korea, citing the Commission's inclination "to misjudge the realities of the situation in Korea in considering an idealistic application of the UN resolutions." Stressing the passage in NSC 8 calling for withdrawal by 31 December 1948, he argued that it "would therefore be contrary to US interests" if developments in the UN led to a prolongation of the occupation.[139]

The mechanics of ending the occupation, however, served to deepen the US commitment in Korea while simultaneously eroding its foundation. The creation of an indigenous authority within South Korea linked American credibility to the viability of the ROK government. Elections for a National Assembly were held in the south on 10 May 1948, and Syngman Rhee was elected as the first President of the Republic of Korea on 20 July. US Military Government was terminated on 15 August, and the process of transfering authority to the new government of the ROK began. There was, in this regard, no turning back.[140]

This evolutionary change heightened the State Department's perception of Korea's importance. Lovett, responding to Draper on 19 May 1948, referred selectively to

the section of NSC 8 which advocated UN involvement, and emphasized that it was the State Department's

> conviction that the extent to which we may be successful in minimizing the possible ill effects of our withdrawal from Korea will depend in large measure upon the extent to which the authority of the UN is associated with the program of which that withdrawal is a part.

The timetable for withdrawal, by implication, had to take a back seat to the creation of conditions which would minimize the political cost to the United States.[141] This position was elaborated in a 23 June 1948 letter from Marshall to Army Secretary Kenneth Royall. While conceding that Army plans for withdrawal "would appear to be entirely consistent with" NSC 8, the Secretary of State argued that "the present world situation" and "the inescapable effect which our actions in Korea will have upon that situation" necessitated that "sufficient flexibility should be maintained in the preparation and execution of withdrawal plans" to allow for possible changes in response to "UN action or other developments."[142]

The Army, however, having finally been given a date upon which to base plans for withdrawal, was not about to show any flexibility. Royall, responding the same day, observed that the Army was doing its part to create the conditions outlined in NSC 8, and was therefore "proceeding on the assumption that conditions will be fulfilled which will permit the withdrawal of U.S. Occupation Forces from Korea by 31 December 1948 as envisaged in NSC No. 8."[143]

The State Department did not concede the point, though, and once again, in an 8 July 1948 letter from Lovett to Royall, insisted that Army withdrawal plans should be "sufficiently flexible to provide for suspension, delay or other adjustment consistent with the extent of achievement of U.S. policy objectives" in Korea.[144]

This desire to delay withdrawal was a manifestation of a more sweeping reevaluation taking place in the State Department. Jacobs, for example, who had so forcefully questioned further US involvement in Korea the previous September, sent a cable on 26 May 1948 which revealed a change of heart. Noting that his earlier comments had been made in a "spirit of frustration and defeatism," he observed that "that atmosphere has changed and a spirit and a will to meet [the] dangers that face us, consistent with our strength and prestige and with [the] hopes of other peoples who must stand or fall with us, is resurgent." He argued that this new spirit required a reevaluation of the decisions which had been made during the earlier period so that US actions in Korea would not "belie what we are doing to [the] contrary elsewhere."[145] More specifically, in a 12 August telegram, he argued that the US

> should stand firm everywhere on [the] Soviet perimeter, including Korea, until we know more clearly what actions will be taken in [the] General Assembly and what will be [the] outcome of our present negotiations with respect to Berlin and the rest of Germany.

Butterworth agreed with this recommendation, and in a 17 August memo urged that public announcement of the troop withdrawal be postponed until the General Assembly, which was scheduled to convene on 21 September, had the opportunity to consider the situation in Korea.[146]

In part, Jacobs' change of heart was a reaction to moves which the Truman administration was taking to strengthen the military in response to the March crisis. The JCS had recommended a supplemental appropriation for fiscal year 1949 to bring available strength closer to obligations, and it was obviously felt that an increase in resources would allow the US to reconsider some commitments, such as Korea, which had earlier been unsupportable. But Truman wanted to limit the supplemental appropriation to $1.5 billion. Secretary of Defense James Forrestal wanted an increase of 349,500 men - 240,000 for the Army - at an estimated cost of $3 billion, and the services came in with a "minimum" program totaling $9 billion. Forrestal finally submitted a request for $3.481 billion, most of which was approved by Congress, but the balance was critically altered. The Army ultimately received only a slight increase in manpower, and funding for Universal Military Training, a favored project of Secretary of State Marshall and the Army's best hope for dealing with its manpower problems, was eliminated in favor of a build-up of the Air Force.[147]

Having already postponed the planned commencement of withdrawal from 15 August to 15 September, the Army now began to push forward with the reduction of occupation forces in Korea, and indicated that 15 November was "the date beyond which continued withdrawal would make the occupation untenable."[148]

At this point, the South Koreans themselves, despite their earlier vehement opposition to the occupation, made a request for "the retention of U.S. occupation forces in Korea for the time being," counting their presence, along with the development of security forces and the continuation of economic assistance, as "essential elements" of US support for the fledgling ROK government. Dr. Cho Pyong Ok, the Special Representative of President Rhee, told Lovett "without hesitation" that the North Koreans would attack South Korea if all occupation forces were withdrawn, and urged the United States to "not forsake Korea."[149] The ROK National Assembly on 20 November formally requested the retention of US forces in Korea until ROK security forces were strong enough to maintain order.[150]

This belated shift in the position of the ROK government was in response to the 19 October Yosu rebellion, as well as the impending release to North Korea of troops previously fighting with the Chinese Communists in Manchuria. The revolt of the ROK 14th Regiment at Yosu highlighted the seriousness of the problems facing the Rhee government.

Despite its contention that the uprising "quickly lost momentum because it failed to gain sympathizers from the populace," the revolt had in fact spread to several surrounding towns, supported by widespread opposition to the government and the police, and a major operation was required to quell it.[151]

John Muccio, the U.S. Representative to the ROK, described the regime in Seoul as "an incompetent government without strong public support and adequate security forces faced with prepared rebellious Communist internal elements and superior hostile external military force," a situation he characterized, with some understatement, as "grave." He suggested, though, that there was hope that a stable economy might eventually be developed, which might lead to the creation of a stable government. While the continued presence of US troops was "no panacea," and South Korean unity was more important that mere military strength, he argued that a temporary extension of the occupation to give the ROK government a "period of grace" would be "indispensable" if it was to have any chance of successfully resolving its difficulties.[152]

On 9 November 1948 Saltzman wrote to Wedemeyer, who was at that time the Army's Director of Plans and Operations, to indicate the latest State Department position:

> It would be premature and prejudicial to the interests of the U.S. to enter into the final and irreversible stages of troop withdrawal from Korea before the UN General

> Assembly has had an opportunity at its present session to consider and take action upon the Korea problem.

As a result, the State Department did not want the reduction of forces in Korea then underway to progress beyond "the critical point" earlier set at 15 November.[153]

In response to these concerns, the Army on 15 November directed General MacArthur to retain one regimental combat team of 7500 men in Korea. But the General Assembly's passage on 12 December of a resolution recognizing the Republic of Korea as the only lawful government in Korea seemed to remove the State Department's last objection to withdrawal. In addition, the impending withdrawal of all Soviet forces from North Korea by the end of December 1948, which had been announced on 18 September, placed pressure on the US to end the occupation lest it appear less willing than the Russians to comply with the wishes of the General Assembly. Draper, responding to Saltzman's earlier communication, requested that the State Department agree to initiation of withdrawal on 1 February 1949, with completion scheduled for 31 March 1949.[154]

At this juncture, on 17 December, Bishop and Bond drafted a memo which represented "a bold effort within the State Department to reinstate the ambiguous and optimistic geopolitics of earlier years."[155] They proposed to review the conclusion of NSC 8, evaluating US policy in Korea "as part of an overall Pacific policy based upon the fundamental

national objectives as well as the security requirements of the United States in the Far East as a whole." They argued that "the question of withdrawal must be linked to the larger question of the probable repurcussions of such withdrawal throughout Northeast Asia." In particular, they observed that if the communists dominated the entire Korean peninsula Japan would be surrounded on three sides; this would result in "an intensification of efforts to bring Japan within the sphere of communist power" and "among the Japanese an even greater uneasiness flowing from their exposed position." In light of these considerations, they advocated a basic reexamination of the withdrawal decision.[156]

As a result of this renewed divergence of opinion over withdrawal, the issue was once again referred to the National Security Council; General MacArthur's views were also solicited, "with particular reference to the possible repurcussions of such withdrawal on our position in Japan." The State Department meanwhile refused to agree to the Army proposal to initiate withdrawal on 1 February 1949, contending that, despite the successful resolution of the Korean question in the United Nations, "other developments have in the meantime served to underline the grave risks which the United States would incur in completing the withdrawal of its occupation forces from Korea at the present time," perhaps a reference to events in China.[157]

Based on the recommendation of MacArthur, the Army again agreed to delay the completion of withdrawal, this time until 10 May 1949, the anniversary of the elections in South Korea. The State Department, however, declined to discuss the issue pending completion of the ongoing NSC review.[158] Royall then traveled to Japan to meet with MacArthur, and stopped in Seoul, where he met with Rhee and Muccio. His account of this meeting stated that Rhee "would have no objection to us getting out at once" if the US would beef up its Advisory Mission and provide "a reasonable amount of additional arms," but Muccio, in an annex, diplomatically labeled Royall's phrasing "somewhat too specific." He suggested 30 June 1949 as the "best target date for the completion of withdrawal," provided adequate equipment and training had been provided to the ROK security forces by then.[159]

The withdrawal question was finally settled when the National Security Council review of NSC 8 was approved on 22 March 1949 as NSC 8/2.[160] After reviewing developments in Korea since NSC 8, and repeating the arguments for US involvement in Korea in largely the same words used in the earlier study, NSC 8/2 concluded that the US still had basically the same three options: abandon Korea, guarantee it unconditionally, or,

> as a middle course . . . establish within practicable and feasible limits conditions of support of the Government of the Republic of Korea as a means of facilitating the

> reduction of the U.S. commitment of men and money in Korea while at the same time minimizing to the greatest practicable extent the chances of south Korea's being brought under Communist domination as a consequence of the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces.

This was the course of action which NSC 8 had advocated, and which the US was pursuing. The State Department, however, by continually delaying withdrawal, had clearly been attempting to retain US forces in Korea as an adjunct to the programs of economic, military and political support. NSC 8/2 rejected this approach, concluding that while US assistance must continue, it should "not be dependent upon the continued presence of" US forces in Korea. It further concluded that US support of the ROK government "need not be dependent upon the further retention of U.S. occupation forces in Korea" as long as this support included the creation of indigenous security forces "capable of serving effectively as a deterrent to external aggression and a guarantor of internal order in south Korea," the implementation of plans for economic assistance, and continued political support for the ROK "both within and without the framework of the UN."

The report conceded that the withdrawal of US occupation forces, "even with the compensatory measures provided herein," might be followed by a major North Korean effort to "overthrow the Republic of Korea through direct military aggression or inspired insurrection," but observed that "this risk will obtain equally at any time in the forseeable

future." If anything, the Army saw the turmoil in South Korea as a vindication of its position; the shaky Rhee government was not one upon which it wished to be dependent. Since it was felt that further postponement of withdrawal would not reduce the risk but would instead increase the danger that occupation forces "might be either destroyed or obliged to abandon Korea in the event of a major hostile attack," and with the understanding that General MacArthur supported withdrawal and had certified that it "would not adversely affect the U.S. position in Japan," NSC 8/2 concluded that withdrawal should be completed by 30 June 1949, the date which Muccio had proposed. It stipulated, however, that "the U.S. should make it unmistakably clear that this step in no way constitutes a lessening of U.S. support of the Government of the Republic of Korea."

Like its predecessor NSC 8, NSC 8/2 was clearly a compromise document; it tried to reconcile the essentially incompatible views of the generals and the diplomats. But in doing so the US was clearly trying to 'have its cake and eat it too.' Korea was, by compromise, too important to lose but not important enough to pay to keep. Matray argues that, as NSC 8/2 so baldly asserted, the final decision to withdraw occupation forces did not constitute a lessening of US support for the ROK. In his view, the decision to withdraw without provision of a military guarantee was not an abandonment of the ROK, since the policy of containment

by economic and political means being pursued in Korea did not require a military commitment "any more than it did in Greece and Turkey."[161] The difference, of course, was that the obvious American interest in Greece and Turkey implied a situational commitment which obviated the necessity of a formalized nonsituational commitment. This did not apply in the case of Korea. In the absence of either type of security commitment, a substantial US investment in the development of strong security forces and a sound economy in the Republic of Korea, factors essential to the political development of the new republic, would be hard to sell to an economy-minded Congress. Fuzzy compromises might be possible in the National Security Council, but in the cold light of the budgetary process either Korea was important or it wasn't. Without US support, though, it seemed unlikely that the ROK would be able to survive, much less evolve into a showplace of Asian democracy.

IV. THE DEFENSE PERIMETER

A. THE CONCEPT OF AN ASIAN DEFENSE PERIMETER

The American military withdrawal from Korea, and the concomitant refusal to make a firm commitment to the defense of the Republic of Korea, were not isolated events, but were merely a part, and not a major part at that, of America's entire approach in Asia at this time. It will be recalled that the Yalta system was predicated on the existence of a strong, independent and friendly China which would protect US interests on the Asian mainland and contain Soviet expansionism in Asia. As the fortunes of the Nationalists in the Chinese civil war declined, however, it became increasingly and painfully clear that the dream of a unified China friendly to the United States would not be realized. The United States reluctantly concluded that the Nationalist regime could not be saved by anything less than a full-scale US intervention in China; this option was firmly rejected.

While the spread of nationalism in Asia required a primarily non-military response, the debacle in China also called for a reevaluation of America's strategic position. Kennan observed, as early as 14 March 1948, that the United States was "operating without any over-all strategic concept for the entire western Pacific area." He suggested at that time that the United States should "endeavor to influence events on the mainland of Asia in ways favorable to our

security," but "would not regard any mainland areas as vital to us." He recommended the establishment of "a U-shaped U.S. security zone embracing the Aleutians, the Ryukyus, the former Japanese mandated islands, and . . . Guam," with Okinawa as its "central and most advanced point." Japan and the Philippines were to be demilitarized and left outside of this security zone as neutralized areas. Except for its treatment of the Phillipines, this formulation was identical to a proposal made to Kennan by MacArthur less than two weeks earlier when they met in Tokyo.[162]

The consensus in support of the defense perimeter concept developed gradually, but it was generally accepted in Washington by the summer of 1949, when the US occupation of Korea was finally ended. Curiously, however, this consensus was the result of a temporary confluence of interests; the State Department, the military establishment, and General MacArthur had conflicting interests, and based their analyses on assumptions which often differed radically.[163]

The State Department, reflecting the ideas which had been developed by Kennan in the Policy Planning Staff, was pessimistic about the ability of the United States to influence events in Asia, both because of its understanding of the problem as emerging nationalism and its belief that there were limits to the resources which the US could afford to expend in promoting its national security. It believed,

however, that events in Asia, in particular the fall of the Nationalist regime in China, did not pose a serious threat to the United States. Since the threat was defined as Russian expansionism, albeit promoted by means of international communism, US interests could be safeguarded by combating Soviet control of its satellites as opposed to Communist ideology. The United States would be far better off stepping away from the Asian mainland temporarily than allying itself, at potentially great cost and with little anticipated benefit, with so-called 'democratic' regimes which did not even enjoy the support of their own people. This was, in many ways, the great lesson of the fall of Chiang in China. Syngman Rhee's government in Seoul was clearly seen by many analysts as little more than a second rate replica which would be beset by all the same problems which had plagued the US relationship with the Nationalists.[164]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, by contrast, did not agree that China should be abandoned; they felt that it was both possible and desirable for the United States to try to halt the spread of Communism there. In part this was because they also disagreed with Kennan's interpretation of the threat. They believed that the Chinese Communists were "Moscow inspired" and should therefore be regarded as "tools of Soviet policy."[165] They supported the defense perimeter concept despite this, prompted in large part by the

increasingly stringent limits on the resources at their disposal, as well as their belief that control of the Asian mainland, including Korea, would not be vital in the event of an all-out war with the Soviet Union.[166]

MacArthur, who by virtue of his position in Japan had a significant influence in shaping America's Asia policy, came to support the defense perimeter from yet another perspective. He was much more of an ideologue in his view of the Communist menace, but he also realized the utter futility of trying to oppose the Chinese Communists with US troops, as well as the self-defeating effect of lengthy military occupations such as those the US was conducting in Japan and Korea.[167]

Thus, while there was a consensus of sorts in support of the defense perimeter concept, it was a very fragile one. It rested on a fortuitous confluence of interests which was unlikely to be maintained as the situation developed. One of the areas in which this consensus most likely to break down was Korea. Although Kennan had been ready enough to write off Korea, this approach was never accepted by other elements in the State Department, who continued to stress its symbolic importance in the context of the Cold War.

B. TROOP WITHDRAWAL

While provisions for military and economic assistance to Korea were pursued, the Army also went about executing the

other major recommendation of NSC 8/2: final military withdrawal. In doing this, though, the Defense Department continued to meet with opposition, both from the State Department and from the ROK. When the Army requested that the security classification of the withdrawal operation be downgraded to facilitate completion by 30 June, the State Department refused to concur, implying that more military assistance would have to be supplied to the ROK. The Army believed that the Koreans were holding out for more, observing that "President Rhee's reluctance to agree to the 30 June date, presumably, is based upon his hope for a promise of more military aid than the conclusions of NSC 8/2 would provide." Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson personally wrote to Acheson, pointing out that previous postponements had created "serious logistical and budgetary problems," and threatening that, in the event of a continuation of the occupation beyond 30 June, "it will be necessary for your Department to support such supplemental appropriations as may be necessary." Acheson, however, refused to budge, retorting that the withdrawal must be accomplished with minimum risk to the other US objectives in Korea.[168]

At this juncture, on 27 June 1949, the Army produced a paper which looked beyond the completion of withdrawal to consider possible US responses to a North Korean invasion.[169] Considering the ad hoc nature of the eventual

US response when the invasion actually occurred, it is significant that the military was not unprepared for this eventuality.

The Army felt that the South Korean security forces were capable of handling any internal disruptions. The main threat to the ROK, therefore, was a full-scale invasion from the north. It was believed that such an invasion would be in concert with the Soviet Union and Communist China, without whose support the North Koreans were not capable of "sustained and comprehensive military operations." This would require some sort of US response.

Five possible courses of action were considered: implementation of emergency plans for the evacuation of all US personnel in Korea, presentation of the problem to the United Nations Security Council, initiation of a police action under UN auspices to restore law and order and the boundary at the 38th parallel, reentry of US forces alone at the request of the ROK, and application of the Truman Doctrine to Korea. The Army concluded that the first two options, evacuation and presentation of the problem to the UN, should be adopted. Direct US military action was rejected because it would commit the United States to "a unilateral course of action and responsibility in Korea from which it so recently has struggled to extricate itself," and "lead to a long and costly involvement of U.S. forces in an undeclared war." Interestingly, the Army also rejected the

application of the Truman Doctrine to Korea, although many analysts, especially Matray, contend that the US had in fact been applying the Truman Doctrine in Korea for some time. The Army, exhibiting an understanding of containment more in line with Kennan's original concept than with the rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine, argued that the situation in Korea was only vaguely comparable to that in Greece and Turkey; the key difference was Korea's lack of strategic value. Application of the Truman Doctrine was unwarranted because this "would require prodigious effort and vast expenditures far out of proportion to the benefits to be expected."

Finally, the initiation of a police action "with U.N. sanction," which was of course the actual US response when the invasion did occur a year later, was also rejected because it involved "a militarily disproportionate expenditure of U.S. manpower, resources, and effort at a time when international relations in Europe are in precarious balance." It was admitted, though, that if the US did take the problem to the Security Council, and the Soviet Union for whatever reason did not exercise its veto, the way would be clear to initiate "police action measures and sanctions" if they appeared warranted at that time.

The Joint Chiefs enclosed their comments to the Army study. Reflecting the disparity between missions and resources, the JCS flatly rejected any military involvement in Korea:

> From the strategic viewpoint . . . Korea is of little strategic value to the United States and . . . any commitment to United States use of military force in Korea would be ill-advised and impracticable in view of the potentialities of the over-all world situation and of our heavy international obligations compared with our current military strength.

They concurred with the Army that a US military response to a North Korean invasion, either alone or under UN auspices, would be "militarily unsound."[170]

Two days later, on 29 June 1949, the withdrawal of US occupation forces from Korea was completed. Only a 500-man Military Advisory Group was left behind. As far as the Army was concerned, there was no going back.[171]

C. ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE

In contrast to the alacrity with which the troop withdrawal was completed, the United States was not immediately prepared to provide the assistance needed to comply with NSC 8/2. The fiscal year 1949 budget request for Korean rehabilitation called for only $60 million "for the purchase of raw materials and repair parts;" nothing was included for capital construction.[172] Far more than this would be required if South Korea was to be advanced to the point where it was able to survive on minimal US aid after the departure of occupation forces. Such a program had, however, been proposed by Saltzman in response to a request for guidance from the Economic Cooperation Administration

(ECA), which took over responsibility for Korean aid from the Army as of 1 January 1949.

In a memo dated 7 September 1948 Saltzman recommended a three-year rehabilitation program totaling $410 million, with $180 million in the first year. The goal of this program was to reduce subsequent US costs in Korea to an estimated $45 million annually (compared to an average of $100 million per year since 1945). It was not believed that it would be possible to eliminate US aid entirely; officials doubted that "south Korea alone can ever become fully self-supporting." Both ECA and Army concurred with the State recommendation, though neither believed that Congress was likely to provide the money.[173]

By the time that NSC 8/2 was approved, the ECA had developed Saltzman's proposal into a multi-year rehabilitation program for Korea totaling $410 million through 30 June 1952 (the limit of ECA's legislated existence), with $192 million of that planned for fiscal year 1950. The NSC recommended that legislative approval be sought for this program.[174]

NSC 8/2 had also called for military assistance. Up to this point this had not been a consideration, since southern Korea was occupied by the US Army. Initial US efforts had focused on the restoration of internal order; one of the first acts was the reopenning of the Japanese Police Academy in Seoul on 15 October 1945. When an Office of the Director

of National Defense was created a month later, it controlled not only a new Bureau of Armed Forces, with Army and Navy Departments, but the Bureau of Police as well; the first Director, Brigadier General Lawrence E. Schick, was Hodge's Provost Marshal General.[175]

Nevertheless, American advisors had taken some positive steps. An English language school opened on 5 December 1945, at the Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul, to provide instruction to officer candidates, and recruitment began on 14 January 1946 for "a constabulary-type police reserve." By April 1946 there were, in addition to a regiment at Seoul, seven more regiments in the outlying provinces. Another important step was taken when the police function was removed by the creation of a separate National Police on 29 March 1946, but what little progress this represented toward the creation of a real army was more then negated when the Department of National Defense was redesignated the Department of Internal Security on 15 June 1946; the Bureau of Armed Forces was abolished, and the Army and Navy Departments were redesignated Bureaus of Constabulary and Coast Guard.[176]

American control of the Constabulary officially ended in September 1946, with the Americans technically assuming positions as advisors, but these 'advisors' in reality retained much of the control they had previously exercised. The American influence was limited far more by lack of

personnel, with the number of advisors for the whole Constabulary averaging only six for the entire period from September 1946 to April 1948, and by the restriction of training to use of small arms, basic drill, and "methods of internal security."[177]

A major result of this lack of attention on the part of American occupation authorities was a corresponding premium placed on military experience obtained elsewhere, which in effect meant with either the Chinese or Japanese. In a classic Korean pattern, the military split into factions along these lines, with the factions being further subdivided into friendhsip groups based on factors such as family ties, place of origin, and educational background. These factions competed with each other for influence and access to resources.[178] On top of these factional struggles, the military became caught up in the chaotic political infighting which marked the larger society at this point.[179]

Both of these contests were settled when Syngman Rhee became President of the ROK. The Chinese faction in the military, which had initially been dominant, was supplanted by the Japanese faction when Rhee passed over several more senior members of the former group and appointed Lee Ung-jin, who had served with the Japanese, as the first Army Chief of Staff. This move was intended to assure Rhee of the loyalty of the military "by installing young and more

malleable officers in the key posts." The influence of the China faction was all but eliminated with the assassination of Kim Koo, Rhee's principal rival and their chief supporter. Both the factional struggling and the politicization of the military by Rhee undermined efforts to create an effective fighting force. This problem was exacerbated by the extensive anti-Communist purge which followed the Yosu rebellion of October 1948, which seriously weakened the fledgling military apparatus.[180]

With the impending withdrawal of US forces, however, it became necessary to develop indigenous forces which would enable the Koreans to maintain internal security and control their borders. On 10 March 1948 the JCS had authorized the Constabulary to be augmented to a force of 50,000 men and equipped with small arms, cannon up to 105-mm., and armored vehicles "as deemed appropriate." As US troops began to leave Korea during late 1948 and early 1949, they turned over their equipment to these Korean forces; this consisted mostly, however, of small arms and light machine guns.[181]

By the time NSC 8/2 was prepared, the Republic of Korea had 65,000 men in its army, of whom 50,000 were equipped "with U.S. infantry type materiel." There were also 45,000 police and 4000 men in a Coast Guard. Although the Koreans wanted an air force, the US had provided only "twelve observation type aircraft." The NSC recommended that legislative authorization be sought for military assistance

to slightly augment these forces, the ultimate goal being "a well-trained and -equipped Army of 65,000 men, including air detachments, suitable for maintaining internal order under conditions of political strife and inspired disorder and for maintaining border security," as well as a 4000 man Coast Guard and a 35,000 man police force.[182] Washington was careful not to give the ROK an offensive capability because of its very legitimate concern over the desires of Rhee to reunite the peninsula by force.[183]

The recommendations of NSC 8/2 were implemented by two pieces of legislation which the administration sent to Congress in the summer of 1949. Truman sent a message to Congress on 7 June 1949 requesting $150 million for economic assistance to Korea - the Korean Aid Act of 1949. He pointed out that Korea up to that point had been receiving only basic relief - enough for subsistence but not for any economic progress toward self-sufficiency. Without continued US aid the ROK economy "would collapse - inevitably and rapidly." But Truman wanted more than continued relief; he was asking Congress for a plan that would lead to economic recovery.[184]

The next day, Acting Secretary of State Webb appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Committee to support the request for Korean aid. He called the bill "among the most important which the Department of State is supporting at this session of Congress." Webb also explicitly linked

economic and military power in Korea: "a sound economy is the basis of military as well as political strength. The Korean Government cannot maintain a force able to insure internal order without a viable economy."[185]

The package was completed on 25 July 1949 when the administration submitted to Congress the Mutual Defense Appropriations Program (MDAP), which included military aslstance for the ROK. The avowed goal of this assistance was to give the ROK "forces adequate to protect itself against internal disturbances and external attacks short of an aggressive war supported by a major power."[186]

The initiative now passed to Congress. Truman expected trouble. As Matray points out,

> The failure of the Republican party to capture the presidency in 1948 had erased the last remnants of bipartisanship in foreign affairs. The Truman administration recognized from the outset that it would obtain congressional approval for the Korean aid package only with considerable difficulty. 187

The request for aid to Korea also furnished the Republicans with an opportunity to criticize the administration for the 'loss' of China. As the Committee itself noted in its Historical Series,

> The task of the administration's witnesses before the committee was difficult. On the one hand, they had to convince the committee of the importance of the survival of South Korea to U.S. interests in the Far East. Yet, they had to admit that strategically and militarily South Korea was of little significance. Since the administration could present no direct link between the security of the United States and the maintenance of the Republic of Korea, the witnesses stressed the psychological impact and the "loss of prestige" that would

result from the withdrawal of American aid and a Communist takeover of the South. Ultimately, however, the administration wished to place the responsibility for the future of Korea on the Koreans themselves. 188

The State Department pushed aid to Korea; the Army did as well, since failure to secure aid might have jeopardized the recently achieved troop withdrawal. In fact, William Stueck contends that the Army deliberately exaggerated the military strength of the ROK in testimony to Congress in order to achieve the dual goals of troop withdrawal and substantial US economic and military assistance.[189] Certainly all the players in the bureaucracy, both Army and State Department, had a vested interest in executing the compromise program outlined in NSC 8/2. But they had to overcome opposition in Congress in order to acquire the necessary funding. The hearings conducted by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs are therefore significant both as a summation of the administration's Korea policy and as a critique of that policy by some members of Congress, most prominently Republican Congressman Walter H. Judd of Minnesota, a leading critic of the Truman administration's China policy.

Drawing a clear parallel between Korea and China, Judd excoriated the request for aid as "just a sop, to try and cover our retreat, so it does not expose publicly that we are letting our allies down, after all our promises." At another point he called the program "a $150 million coverup

for our inability or decision not to take action to carry out a promise we made to the Koreans. It is an attempt to make look respectable a policy that is not respectable, from the standpoint of a commitment of the United States." He also criticized the compromise nature of the program, entailing as it did limited aid without a military commitment, as "half fish half foul." Judd foresaw only disastrous consequences from this sort of policy. On the one hand, it would give the South Koreans an exaggerated opinion of the actual strength of the US commitment; he believed that "it would be better to tell them they are on their own and let them make their own terms with the enemy, instead of giving them the impression we are going to help if we do not intend to." On the other hand, if the United States was not going to do what was necessary to save South Korea from communism, and was going to abandon it sooner or later, whatever resources were put into the ROK in the interim would be wasted. He ultimately saw the proposed aid program as "an attempt to make the Koreans and the world think we are carrying out a commitment, when we know the odds are overwhelming against us."[190]

The administration's witnesses were thus forced to defend the decision to withdraw US forces, a move which the bill's opponents believed was critically undercutting the very objectives in Korea for which the aid was purportedly being requested. Kennan, then still head of the Policy

Planning Staff, observed that the US forces in Korea were not strong enough to resist North Korean forces, and were therefore not a "serious deterrent" against an attack from the north. Neither were they strong enough to "police South Korea," a role considered more likely since the main threat was felt to be communist infiltration of South Korea. The future therefore depended on the success of the Republic of Korea in maintaining order, providing an effective deterrent against invasion, and meeting the needs of the people to minimize internal disruption. If the ROK was successful, US forces would be redundant. If the ROK failed, the US forces could not effect the outcome, and would simply be caught up in the maelstrom, the outcome the Army had feared all along. As Kennan pointed out, "there is no worse position for our troops than to find themselves suddenly engulfed in a sea of adverse political sentiment." He concluded that he would "feel happy when we are out of that exposed position in a military sense."[191]

Acheson conceded that the loss of Korea to the communists would adversely effect US security, "because they get that much closer to Japan and because they cause that much more trouble." But Kennan disputed the contention that the US troop withdrawal would have an adverse psychological impact:

> I do not think the psychological repurcussions will be very great in the Far East, because it is my impression . . . that this action of ours in removing them has

> already been extensively discounted all over that area. People have known that it was our plan over the last year, they know the United Nations calls upon us to do it and they know we are planning to do it.

Finally, he argued against US military intervention in South Korea even if the ROK was unable to hold, calling this "really the vital point."[192]

The Army was represented by MG Charles L. Bolte and BG Thomas S. Timberman, who reiterated the standard Army arguments against the retention of forces. Timberman emphasized the lack of military utility of the US position in Korea, pointing out that the peninsula could be "handled better by our air forces and our sea forces . . . as opposed to troops actually on the ground in an untenable position," and that "any reentry on the continent would bypass and not use Korea." Bolte also expressed the Army's desire to avoid becoming embroiled in fighting in Korea in the event of a North Korean invasion, commenting that "we certainly would not want our tactical units involved in combat on the Korean peninsula."[193]

Despite the administration's effort, the House, in January 1950, defeated its version of the Korean aid bill 192-191, with Republicans opposing it by a margin of six to one. Coming on the heels of the US troop withdrawal, the defeat of the aid bill shocked Syngman Rhee.[194] Acheson later told the House that it created a "great many worries and doubts" in Korea.[195]

The administration's request for aid to Korea was reincarnated as the Far Eastern Economic Assistance Act of 1950 only by the addition of aid for Formosa, and the reduction of aid for Korea from $150 million to $60 million; Congressman Donald Jackson wryly observed that the new bill "resembles the original Korean Aid Act about as much as Forever Amber resembles Mother Goose."[196] It passed on 14 February 1950, authorizing appropriation of $60 million in aid for Korea for the remainder of fiscal year 1950; this was soon amended, on 5 June 1950, to add an extra $100 million for fiscal year 1951.[197] In terms of the credibility of the purported US commitment, however, the damage had already been done. It was abundantly clear that, while the United States desired to see the establishment of a viable, democratic republic in Korea, it was not willing to do very much by way of commitment of resources to promote this outcome. Acheson himself stated the administration's curiously nuanced position on Korea while testifying in support of the Far Eastern Economic Assistance Act, arguing that "we have responsibilities but no commitments."[198]

This impression was only reinforced by the composition of military assistance provided. After the final withdrawal of US forces, some additional equipment was turned over to the ROK, but it consisted "principally of such items as carbines, howitzers, rifles, machine guns, mortars, trucks, and 20 liaison-type airplanes . . . helmets, boots,

blankets, cartridge belts, and tents."[199] This resulted in the achievement of the NSC 8/2 goal of equipping a 65,000 man force with US equipment, but it did not answer the needs of the ROK forces for fighter aircraft or heavier ground equipment.

In fact, the United States did not intend to meet these requests. The planned military assistance program was "mainly in the form of maintenance materials and spare parts to supplement the military equipment turned over under the Surplus Property Act."[200] The US Air Force opposed requests by the ROK for F-51 fighters, which were supported by Ambassador to Korea Muccio, despite the fact that the Far East Air Force (FEAF) in Japan was "junking" surplus fighters, including F-51s. The Air Force interpreted the terminology in NSC 8/2 to refer to "liaison aircraft only," but, more fundamentally, objected to the whole idea of military assistance to Korea. As late as 10 May 1950, it maintained that "there is no military justification for military assistance to Korea."[201] The Army, for its part, deliberately withheld tanks, 155-mm. howitzers and other heavy equipment; it maintained that Korean roads and bridges would not support such heavy items, but was mostly concerned that "the Republic of Korea would embark upon military adventures of its own into North Korea if it had "offensive-type" equipment."[202] This was a very real concern, based upon Rhee's frequent public declarations

calling for reunification at any price.[203] Clearly, though, the decision was made very much on the side of caution, indicating the relatively low weight given to the security of South Korea in determining the proper balance.

Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, clarified the US position during hearings on the 1950 Mutual Defense Assistance Program. Speaking on 20 June 1950, only five days before the North Korean attack, he argued that the South Koreans

> cannot expect to establish in South Korea, an army, or armed forces which would be able to meet an organized major invasion from the North but we think that they can get themselves up as a going concern if they can take care of everything short of that. Our goal here is to assist the South Koreans to establish a security force which can deal with domestic disorders, armed bands coming across the 38th parallel, and force the opposition to make the choice to fight a major war as the price for taking over southern Korea. We see no present indication that the people across the border have any intention of fighting a major war for that purpose. 204

The pattern of relative neglect persisted when assistance under MDAP was actually provided. On 25 October 1949 Congress appropriated $27,640,000 for military assistance to Iran, Korea and the Philippines. A required implementing agreement with the ROK was signed on 26 January 1950, and a program for Korea totaling $10,970,000 was agreed upon on 15 March 1950. By the time of the North Korean invasion in June, however, only a trickle had actually reached Korea, because the decision had been made,

"in view of the status of equipment of the Armed Forces in 1950," to supply this assistance from new procurement.205

V. KOREA IN AMERICA'S ASIA POLICY

A. THE MODERATE APPROACH

On 1 October 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the creation of the People's Republic of China. The victory of the Chinese Communists, coupled with the discovery that the Soviet Union had successfully tested a nuclear weapon the month before, clearly necessitated a new policy, not only towards China but towards Asia as a whole. The State Department advanced such a comprehensive policy in November 1949 in the form of an outline prepared for review with the President.[206]

The most striking aspect of this outline was its continuity with previous thinking on the nature of the Soviet threat and the appropriate US response in Asia. Significantly, the fundamental problem was defined as "a deep-seated revolutionary movement, composed on the one hand of a nationalist revolt against colonial imperialism and on the other hand discontent with existing economic and social conditions." It was recognized that this revolutionary movement had been "captured by the Communists," especially in China and Indochina, and was being used as "the tool of traditional Russian imperialism," but, while the goal of the United States was clearly to halt the spread of Soviet control and influence, the nature of the movement dictated a US response "principally by means other than arms."

The State Department outline indicated that US strategic interests in Asia were under review, but the general understanding was that they were based "in the first instance on the off-shore islands, i.e. Japan, Okinawa, and the Philippines," the so-called defense perimeter, and therefore the US position was "not directly jeopardized by the loss of China."

To further America's political and strategic interests in Asia, then, the outline recommended that ties with China be maintained through trade and America's "historic association with the Chinese people," and that the United States recognize Communist China "when it controls substantially all the territory of China and when it indicates willingness to meet its international obligations." In place of China, Japan was to be restored; the outline recommended conclusion of a peace treaty, with or without the Soviet Union, which would not prevent retention of US bases in Japan nor preclude future bilateral defense cooperation. As for Korea, its importance remained political, "as a yardstick of US ability to cope with Asian problems."

Kennan's influence is clearly discernible. Indeed, in the aftermath of these two seemingly cataclysmic events he stood out by maintaining that nothing had really changed. In a February 1950 draft memo he argued that the fall of China was merely "the culmination of processes which have

long been apparent," and that US policy had both anticipated and allowed for this development. He further claimed that the acquisition by the Soviet Union of an atomic capability also added "no new fundamental element" to the situation. The US had predicted that the Russians would eventually develop an atomic bomb. The fact that they had done it far earlier than even the most pessimistic projections predicted was, in Kennan's view, "of no fundamental significance." Since nothing had occurred to alter the assumptions on which US policy was based, Kennan believed that there was no real reason for concern, and that the perception of a crisis in the Cold War was "largely of our own making."[207]

While Kennan was not unduly concerned by these developments, however, others did not share his equinimity. The fragile consensus which had developed around the defense perimeter concept began to unravel. There was a fundamental disagreement over the nature of the threat to American security from Asian communism. The new Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, did not approve of the State Department approach in China, and called for a reassessment of US policy in the region. To a large extent this resurgence of interest on the part of the military was stimulated by the appropriation, under Section 303 of the MDAP, of $75 million to be used to contain communism in and around China. While the Defense Department was eager to liquidate its involvement in Korea, it had always been

interested in Taiwan as a strategic asset, but was prevented from doing much about it by a lack of resources; Section 303 offered a potential source of funding. The State Department, however, had different plans for the money, and at any rate insisted that the United States refrain from any involvement with Taiwan as a prerequisite for its policy of promoting Chinese nationalist sentiment and thereby encouraging a "Titoist" rift between the Russians and the Chinese communists. The reassessment which Johnson had commissioned was an attempt to reverse this moderate policy advocated by the State Department as a precursor to a more aggressive Taiwan policy. Indeed, the draft report, NSC 48, challenged the assumption that a split between Communist regimes in Peking and Moscow was likely or even desirable, and instead urged a more forceful effort to aid the 'forces of freedom' which were combating communism in the region. The State Department, however, was able to successfully change this draft, so that the final report, NSC 48/1, contained much of the rhetoric of its but little of its substance.[208]

The State Department outline thus formed the basis of the conclusions and recommendations, which were adopted on 30 December 1949 as NSC 48/2.[209] In essence, NSC 48/2 indicated that the United States should do what it could to improve the situation in Asia, but avoid becoming so identified with the effort that it would be responsible if

things didn't work out. The proposed US role was essentially passive, acting more as a facilitator than a leader. Regional associations of non-Communist Asian states would be encouraged, but they had to be "the result of a genuine desire on the part of the participating nations to cooperate for mutual benefit in solving the political, economic, social and cultural problems of the area;" the United States could not "take such an active part in the early stages of the formation of such an association that it will be subject to the charge of using Asiatic nations to further United States ambitions." The US "should encourage the creation of an atmosphere favorable to economic recovery and developement in non-Communist Asia, and to the revival of trade along multilateral, non-discriminatory lines," but "should carefully avoid assuming responsibility for the economic welfare and development" of Asia.

Recognizing nationalism as the dominant political force in Asia, the study called upon the United States to "continue to use its influence in Asia toward resolving the colonial-nationalist conflict in such a way as to satisfy the fundamental demands of the nationalist movement," but, since the colonialists in Asia were America's allies in Europe, this had somehow to be accomplished while simultaneously "minimizing the strain on the colonial powers."

The power of nationalism also formed the basis for the policy toward China, under which the US would "exploit, through appropriate political, psychological and economic means, any rifts between the Chinese Communists and the USSR and between the Stalinists and other elements in China, while scrupulously avoiding the appearance of intervention." But recognition of the Chinese Communist regime was to be avoided "until it is clearly in the United States interest to do so," and the US would communicate to friendly governments its views on "the dangers of hasty recognition," although it would "not take a stand which would engage the prestige of the United States in an attempt to prevent such recognition."

At the same time, however, basic US security objectives in Asia included the "reduction and eventual elimination of the preponderant power and influence of the USSR in Asia," and prevention of actions by any other nation or alliance which would "threaten the security of the United States . . . or the peace, national independence and stability of the Asiatic nations," a clear reference to the newly created People's Republic of China. In pursuit of these objectives, the US would, in selected nations, promote the development of "sufficient military power . . . to maintain internal security and to prevent further encroachment by communism." This was clearly the US policy in Korea; NSC 48/2 called for "the extension of political support and economic, technical,

military and other assistance to the democratically-elected Government of the Republic of Korea" under the ECA, MDAP and USIE (U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Program).

It should be immediately obvious that NSC 48/2 was loaded with fundamental contradictions and inconsistencies, reflecting the origin of the document as well as the schism in Washington over the proper response to events in China; the policies it advocated were a clear case of trying to 'have your cake and eat it too'. Asian nationalist goals were to be met, but not at the expense of the European allies. The non-Communist nations in Asia were to be encouraged to assume responsibility for their own future, with the US playing the limited role of a facilitator, but the success or failure of their efforts impinged directly on basic US security objectives; the US was already involved, and would continue to be involved, in nations such as Korea which were politically important but not judged significant enough strategically to justify a defense commitment. The US would try to encourage a rift between Peking and Moscow, as well as undermine the Communist regime in China, but would also somehow avoid the appearance of intervention. It would hold back on recognition of the Communist regime, but not become identified with opposition to recognition.

The contradictory nature of America's Asia policy was nowhere more apparent than in the gap between its political and military aspects. The defense perimeter concept implied

that the Asian mainland, to include countries on the Communist periphery like Korea, was ultimately expendable. While the US would not simply abandon these areas, competition with the Soviets was limited to the political and economic arenas. A corollary to this was the perception of Soviet expansionism, as opposed to communism per se, as the major threat to US security.

This was a viable approach as long as the Soviets also adopted the same limits; this was a key assumption upon which the entire strategy was erected. The strategy of containment was based on the belief that Moscow would not employ overt military means to further its expansionist aims.[210] Military planning concentrated on preparation for a global conflict with the Soviet Union; as Gaddis notes, "the dominant context affecting Washington's strategic thinking in late 1949 and early 1950 was a preoccupation with general war, centered in Europe, in which the Soviet Union would be the main adversary." It was in this context that the Army felt that Korea was more a liability than an asset.[211]

This understanding of the nature of the Cold War in Asia led Washington to believe that it could achieve peace and stability, not only in Korea but elsewhere in Asia, while avoiding the difficult issue of military guarantees for nations which were not strategically vital to the US.[212] But Alexander George and Richard Smoke, in their classic

study of deterrence, argue that this preoccupation with general war caused "a major gap in American strategic thinking and foreign policy planning" which led to the lack of a military commitment to the ROK. This gap "sprang from the failure to envisage that considerations other than Korea's strategic importance in a general war might require a U.S. commitment to its defense."[213]

It would be unfair, however, to suggest that the point was somehow overlooked by planners in Washington. The Army's analysis of possible US responses in the event of a North Korean invasion indicates that the issue had been considered and, at least so far as the military was concerned, resolved: Korea, in any context, was not worth fighting for. But, of course, the State Department did not agree; it still felt that the political consequences of a communist victory were unacceptable. This dichotomy, "between geopolitical assertiveness on the part of the State Department and strategic caution on that of the military," reflected the basic contradiction in American foreign policy between the desire to get tough with the Russians and the insistence on balanced budgets and decreased military spending.[214] As long as the Soviets eschewed military action, these two viewpoints could coexist, albeit uncomfortably. But there was indeed a major gap, the same one which had characterized America's policy in Korea since the beginning, the gap between a situational versus a

nonsituational approach to US commitments on the Asian mainland.

Despite these difficulties, though, the moderate State Department approach continued to hold. On 5 January 1950 Truman affirmed that the US had "no predatory designs on Formosa or on any other Chinese territory," nor did it "desire to obtain special rights or privileges or to establish military bases on Formosa at this time." The US would avoid any involvement in the Chinese civil war: not only would armed forces not be used, but the US would "not provide military aid or advice to Chinese forces on Formosa." Acheson, in separate extemporaneous remarks, amplified this last point, explaining that the reason the Nationalist forces lost was not lack of resources, but lack of will, and that "it is not the function of the United States nor will it or can it attempt to furnish a will to resist and a purpose for resistance to those who must provide for themselves."[215]

A week later, Acheson made his famous speech to the National Press Club in which he examined America's Asian policy.[216] The themes which he developed in this speech were the same ones contained in the State Department outline and NSC 48/2, and reflected Kennan's assumptions about the nature of the problem in Asia. Acheson explained that there was "a developing Asian consciousness" based on "a revulsion against the acceptance of misery and poverty as the normal

conditions of life" as well as a "revulsion against foreign domination." The symbol of this emerging consciousness was nationalism: this, rather than communism, was the "basic revolutionary force" in Asia. Applying this reasoning to the situation in China, he maintained that the US "must not undertake to deflect from the Russians to ourselves the righteous anger, and the wrath, and the hatred of the Chinese people which must develop." The United States, of course, opposed communism, both as a doctrine inimical to everything for which America stood and as "the spearhead of Russian imperialism," but Acheson emphasized that the purpose of US policy in Asia was not merely to oppose communism. Instead, the US sought to assist the peoples of Asia in their own development,

> not as a mere negative reaction to communism but as the most positive affirmation of the most affirmative truth that we hold, which is in the dignity and right of every nation, of every people, and of every individual to develop in their own way, making their own mistakes, reaching their own triumphs but acting under their own responsibility."

The inevitable corollary to this position, however, was that American assistance could be effective only when it was accompanied by a desire and an ability on the part of those being assisted to achieve results.

This approach formed the basis of US assistance to Korea, which Acheson believed should be continued. He characterized the idea "that we should stop half way through the achievement of the establishment" of the ROK as "the

most utter defeatism and utter madness". Nevertheless, in what was destined to become the most famous section of this speech, he outlined the defensive perimeter in Asia, which of course excluded South Korea, concluding that it was impossible to guarantee those areas outside of the perimeter against military attack. If such an attack did occur,

> the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations which so far has not proved a weak reed to lean on by any people who are determined to protect their independence against outside aggression.

B. AGONIZING REAPPRAISAL

Despite these pronouncements, however, the Truman administration became increasingly alienated from Kennan's approach to containment as 1949 turned into 1950. In some respects this was a response to concrete developments--the fall of China and the testing of an atomic device by the Soviet Union, which struck Washington "like a series of hammer blows"--but more fundamentally these events merely applied pressure to a fissure which had always existed.[217]

Kennan's differentiation between vital and peripheral interests had led to the development of the defense perimeter concept, which was predicated on the denial of key island strongpoints to the Soviets. This was basically an asymmetrical response to the Soviet threat, responding in an area of American strength. This implied. however, a

necessary toleration of instances in which Soviet strength would be applied against American weaknesses. Kennan, of course, believed that this was quite possible so long as the vital power centers were safeguarded, but this view had never been wholeheartedly endorsed, the running battle over Korean withdrawal being a good example. Neither Truman nor Acheson could necessarily take the long historical view of Kennan; they had to contend with the very immediate reality of domestic politics and relations with allies. The success of the Communist revolution in China and the Soviet acquisition of atomic weapons created the perception of a gain for the Russians which in turn affected views of the momentum and likely outcome of the Cold War. Kennan emphasized Soviet intentions, but the administration increasingly felt compelled to base its calculations on capabilities, given the high stakes involved and the uncertainty of any estimate of intentions.[218]

There was also a change in the administration's willingness to distinguish between communist regimes. NSC 48/2 supported the policy of encouraging Titoism, using the force of nationalism to limit, and even decrease, Soviet influence. But, at the same time, the rhetoric of the Cold War was being couched more and more in terms of an implacable conflict between hostile ideologies. This view became much harder to resist following the conclusion of the Sino-Soviet Treaty in February 1950. This development also

put increased pressure on the State Department policy of non-intervention in Taiwan; the military had reluctantly gone along with a policy that would lead to the occupation of the island by weak Chinese Communist forces, but it was much less willing to accept a policy which might lead to a Soviet military presence.[219]

This shift was accompanied by a growing alienation between Kennan and Acheson. The thinking of both evolved significantly during this period, but in opposite directions. Kennan became more convinced than ever that there was too much emphasis on the military aspect of the Soviet threat, and, in marked contrast to his earlier contentions, now claimed that it might be possible to negotiate with the Russians. Acheson, on the other hand, now distrusted the Kremlin almost completely. As a result of this growing gulf in perspective, Kennan's advice became increasingly unpalatable to Acheson. Kennan even began to drift away from the other members of his own Policy Planning Staff. Acheson, who had never been a strong supporter of the PPS anyway--it was, after all, Marshall's creation and a reflection of his approach to decisionmaking--finally took the step, in mid-September 1949, of withdrawing the direct access to his office which was one of the cornerstones of the influence and power of the PPS. Kennan responded, in short order, by requesting that he be relieved as head of the PPS and allowed to take a leave of absence from the

State Department. In November, Acheson decided to replace Kennan with his deputy, Paul Nitze, who's views on the Soviet threat and the correct way in which to respond to it were soon to emerge as almost diametrically opposed to those espoused by his former chief. Kennan's views continued to be influential, particularly in the area of Far Eastern policy, as is clear from NSC 48/2, the administration's Taiwan policy pronouncement, and Acheson's Press Club speech, all of which occurred after Kennan's fall from grace. But, when those policies began to be attacked, and the assumptions on which they were based strongly challenged, Kennan was no longer in a position to seriously defend his views.[220]

In early 1950, the attack on the administration's policy went into high gear. The critics of Truman's China policy were joined by those who blamed the loss of China, and most of the other problems faced by the United States in the world, on the influence of Communists in the State Department. Their offensive, which Acheson with characteristic patrician disdain termed the "attack of the primitives," began in earnest with Senator Joseph McCarthy's speech in Wheeling, West Virginia on 9 February 1950.[221] McCarthyism had the unhappy effect of essentially ending any rational debate of the administration's foreign policy, as well as weakening the position of supporters of a moderate approach to China.[222]

A new, countervailing strategy began to emerge in late 1949 and early 1950, one which has been termed Asian rim containment. Predicated on the belief that Communist China was a Soviet satellite and a base for futher Soviet expansion in Asia, it advocated US involvement on the Asian mainland by means of military and economic assistance, in effect establishing a political and psychological arc of containment on the Asian periphery while the more formal military defense perimeter remained tied to the chain of islands offshore. This strategy did not emerge full-blown, nor was it in fact anything particularly new, since a minority had been advocating a similar approach for years. The Defense Department had already begun to break with State over the issue of Taiwan. It was, rather, "a syndrome of discrete decisions linked by a new disposition." It picked up support until it came to dominate US policy.[223]

This shift in approach to the problem of dealing with the Soviet Union began to invalidate the US policy toward Korea in subtle ways. The policy itself held firm, as was evidenced by public pronouncements such as Acheson's Press Club speech, as well as internal documents such as NSC 48/2. But the underlying assumptions upon which the policy had been erected were increasingly challenged. It appeared that the old remedies--economic aid and limited security assistance--would no longer suffice to counter a new and significantly enhanced threat.[224] America's Korea policy

was becoming obsolete, although no one seemed to realize it at the time.[225]

Against this background, the administration conducted a thorough reassessment, under the leadership of Paul Nitze, of America's Soviet policy. The result, NSC 68, represented the viewpoint which was steadily growing to dominate Washington policymaking circles.

VI. NSC 68

A. A SHIFT OF ASSUMPTIONS

On 31 January 1950 Truman instructed the Secretaries of State and Defense

> to undertake a reexamination of our objectives in peace and war and of the effect of these objectives on our strategic plans, in the light of the probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability of the Soviet Union. 226

A special ad hoc working group was formed under Nitze to conduct this study. This group took advantage of the broad terms of their instructions to conduct a thorough review of American foreign policy. Their product, NSC 68, was a major departure in several significant ways.

Nitze believed that the Soviets, having broken America's atomic monoploy, were now willing to take greater risks in pursuit of their objectives. In February 1950 he contended that "recent Soviet moves reflect not only a mounting militancy but suggest a boldness that is essentially new - and borders on recklessness." Unlike Kennan, he did not believe that the Soviets would stop short of the use of force, particularly in local areas.[227] This situation, combined with the relative weakness of conventional US forces, created a situation fraught with danger.

NSC 68 argued that, in such a context, containment was no longer a realistic or adequate policy. If it was not backed up by adequate military strength, containment was no more than "a policy of bluff."[228] More fundamentally, though, the whole containment approach was threatened by the acquisition by the Soviet Union of the atomic bomb: "In a shrinking world, which now faces the threat of atomic warfare, it is not an adequate objective merely to check the Kremlin design, for the absence of order among nations is becoming less and less tolerable."[229]

In sharp contrast to Kennan, who had argued that it was only necessary to hold certain points which were vital by virtue of their military-industrial potential, NSC 68 argued that all areas not already dominated by the Soviet Union were important and had to be held if the US was to avoid an inevitable slide to the very brink of destruction. It suggested that the Soviet Union would nibble away at the periphery of the free world by "piecemeal aggression," attacking areas like Korea which were not vital to US interests. Lacking adequate conventional forces to respond in kind, and unwilling to use atomic weapons in the defense of low priority interests, particularly when threatened with the possibility of a Soviet atomic response, the US would have no choice but to stand by and watch while Communism expanded inexorably. This would cause the US to appear "alternately irresolute and desperate," and lead the other

nations of the world, seeing no hope for the future, to "drift into a course of neutrality eventually leading to Soviet domination."[230] The US, for its part, would have to withdraw gradually in the face of the Kremlin's onslaught, "until we discover one day that we have sacrificed positions of vital interest."[231] Based on this scenario, NSC 68 maintained that "a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere."[232] Finally, because of the losses which the free world had already sustained, most recently and most notably in China, "any substantial further extension of the area under the domination of the Kremlin would raise the possibility that no coalition adequate to confront the Kremlin with greater strength could be assembled."[233]

The United States had up to this point responded to the fundamental problem of matching resources and commitments by limiting commitments as much as possible, and beyond that hoping for the best. NSC 68 argued forcefully that this was no longer adequate in a world in which America's implacable foe, the Soviet Union, had an atomic capability. Instead, it recommended that the United States drastically increase military spending to bring strength into line with commitments, calling this "the only course which is consistent with progress toward achieving our fundamental purpose." It rejected the conventional wisdom that defense spending could not exceed $15 billion without causing destructive inflation, pointing out that World War II had

demonstrated "that the American economy, when it operates at a level approaching full efficiency, can provide enormous resources for purposes other than civilian consumption while simultaneously providing a high standard of living."[234] Though they did not say so in their study, the authors of NSC 68 were contemplating defense expenditures on the order of $35-50 billion per year for several years, until the US achieved the requisite level of military strength.[235]

The rationale which supported this conclusion, however, expanded interests as well as means, and at a much more rapid pace. It effectively invalidated Kennan's distinction between vital and peripheral interests, thereby making all points of contention with the Soviet Union vital to American security. It also vastly increased the importance of perceptions, and placed a premium on the acquisition and retention of allies.[236] Because any expansion of communism was interpreted as a victory for the Soviet Union, and since any victory by the Soviet Union was de facto a defeat for the United States, and since any further defeats would lead inexorably to a final apocalyptic confrontation on terms vastly unfavorable to the United States, it was clearly vital to America to successfully counter whatever move the Soviets might make next, wherever it happened to be.

This was particularly true in Asia, where the Truman administration had, according to its critics, abandoned China to the Communists. John Foster Dulles, writing in May

of 1950, explained that, while the loss of China clearly marked a shift in the balance of power in the favor of the Soviet Union, the extent of this shift would be measured by the US response to the next Soviet move. He argued that, if American actions indicated "a continuing disposition to fall back and allow doubtful areas to fall under Soviet Communist control," US influence would deteriorate in all these peripheral areas, from the Mediterranean to the Pacific.[237] Nitze later pointed out that US policy on Taiwan and Korea did not change after NSC 68, but the ideas in NSC 68 contained the seeds of the rationale which later justified US intervention in the Korean War.[238] Not surprisingly, they were virtually the same ideas which the State Department had been using for years to support its case for a US military presence in Korea; in effect, a nonsituational approach to commitments.

B. THE KOREAN INTERVENTION

On 25 June 1950 North Korea invaded South Korea. It quickly became apparent that South Korean forces would not be able to successfully resist the attack. The United States, despite having placed Korea outside of the defense perimeter, despite having withdrawn ground forces only a year earlier, despite its clear decision not to become involved militarily on the Korean peninsula, soon committed US forces to the Korean War. Why? In particular, did this decision represent a reassessment of the strategic

importance of Korea to the United States? The answer, as with so many things, is both yes and no. The United States did not revise its thinking on Korea so much as it revised its thinking on the meaning of strategic importance, abandoning containment as Kennan had envisioned and sought to practice it, and adopting wholeheartedly the alternate approach outlined in NSC 68.

A great deal has been written about why Truman decided to intervene in Korea.[239] It seems clear that he saw parallels between the attack in Korea, which was widely believed to be sponsored if not actively controlled by the Soviet Union, and the actions of the Axis Powers in Europe prior to the outbreak of World War II. The Korean War seemed to validate the assumptions behind NSC 68: if the US succeeded in stopping the Soviets by political and economic accomplishments in the contested areas of the periphery, the Soviets would simply turn to naked aggression.[240] This interpretation, taken as a general rule for future Soviet behavior, just as clearly invalidated Kennan's approach to containment and demonstrated the urgency of the military buildup called for in NSC 68.

The key consideration in all this, though, is that Korea was important for global political considerations which were essentially unrelated to the precise location of the Communist aggression. The blatant nature of the North Korean attack, and the threat it represented to the system of

collective security which the United States was developing to check Soviet expansion counted far more than the possible loss of the Korean peninsula. As Acheson later explained,

> Korea is of very great importance to the United States and to the United Nations because it is there that the first great effort of collective security is being made to repel an armed attack. . . . It is motivated by the security of the United States, because this whole question of collective security is one of the bases of our own security; and, therefore, when this attack occurred in Korea and Korea appealed to the United Nations for assistance against an unprovoked armed attack, it was of the greatest importance that the collective-security system should work, the United Nations should come to the assistance of Korea, and that this attack should be repelled, because, if that is not done, then I think the whole system of collective security will begin to disintegrate. 241

This was more than anything else a triumph of the nonsituational approach, the view that US prestige and credibility required a response, particularly to a blatant act of aggression, regardless of the considerations of particular military-strategic value which had led to the US withdrawal from Korea. Since US national security had come to be defined in terms of maintenance of peace throughout the world, US interests, "like peace, were considered indivisible."[242] It was, in many respects, the logical denouement of the process which had begun with the Truman Doctrine, the "globalization of containment in terms of operational commitments as well as rhetoric."[243]

Not all analysts agree with this interpretation. Iriye feels that the primary US stake in Korea was in terms of the new status quo in East Asia it was trying to establish, and

that the US intervention was specifically aimed at demonstrating to the countries of that region that they were not being abandoned as many believed China had been abandoned.[244] But it seems clear that, while the US was concerned about Asia, it was the ultimate global implications of a perception that the Americans were in full retreat that was feared the most.

Matray argues that while the US may have ruled out the desirability of using military force in Korea, it nonetheless had made a commitment in prestige by means of economic aid and military assistance which was sufficient to result in a US military commitment when it became clear that the ROK could not defend itself successfully. He sees the US assistance program not as a limited response to a limited interest, but rather as a test case of economic containment, a second chance to show that the mistakes made in China were not inevitable and that this approach, which had worked so well with the Marshall Plan in Europe, could also work in Asia, but without any military commitment comparable to NATO. In his view Korea, far from being a sideshow, occupied "a central position in Washington's overall approach in Asia." The desire to demonstrate the viability of this approach to containing the Soviet Union implied a commitment to safeguard the fledgling Republic:

> To permit the Communists to conquer South Korea after the United States had expended so much in energy and resources to prevent just such an outcome simply was not a viable

> alternative. . . . In the end, American military intervention in the Korean War constituted no reversal of policy, but merely the fulfillment of a commitment. 245

This argument, however, does not stand up to scrutiny. The US abandoned a far greater stake in China. Further, the US had never pursued its Korea policy with particular zeal, as was shown by the difficulty of getting aid approved in Congress. Prior planning, especially by the military, indicated a willingness to lose Korea if necessary rather than reply with US forces. In the event, Truman reversed this policy, but it was a reversal.

Matray more persuasively contends that the North Korean attack was the final break between the earlier view of the Soviet threat as being primarily limited to subversion and infiltration, and the post-war view of it as an overt military threat. A policy of using economic aid and military assistance to develop viable client states no longer seemed sufficient, since the Soviets apparently were responding to US success with naked military aggression: "Moscow's resort to armed force for the destruction of "wholesome" nations appeared to justify, if not demand, an American willingness to employ its military power to counter the new Soviet strategy."[246] But this only reinforces the global context of the US response. The US was not fighting to keep Korea, but rather to avoid the appearance that it was losing the Cold War.

Matray also characterizes Truman's Korea strategy as a way of atoning for the failure in China and silencing Republican criticism, but this too seems to miss the mark.[247] Vis a vis the Republicans, Korea was a liability, an area to which the criticism of China policy could be extended, never a potential asset. This was a reflection of the fact that the Republicans, by and large, never really cared about Korea in and of itself. A success in Korea would not change their basic position on China, while a failure would be used as a weapon in their continuing struggle with Truman and the Democrats. One of the leading critics of Truman and his China policy, Senator Robert A. Taft (R, OH) in a speech to the Senate on 28 June 1950, stated that "the time had to come, sooner or later, when we would give definite notice to the Communists that a move beyond a declared line would result in war," but he was not sure that the US had "chosen the right time or the right place to declare this policy," since "Korea itself is not vitally important to the United States."[248]

The military also continued to have doubts about Korea. When asked by Senator H. Alexander Smith if there had not been "an eleventh-hour shift of our feeling with regard to the strategic importance of Korea?" General Omar Bradley responded succintly: "No, sir." Even General Wedemeyer maintained that, while "there were those who felt that Korea was of strategic significance," he did "not happen to share

that feeling and I do not think it is necessary to make these sacrifices we have to hold Korea."[249]

In essence, the military's concern continued to be the commitment of scarce resources to Korea, which was still seen as a strategic backwater. General Marshall conceded that Korea's "close relationship to Japan, and, of course, to Manchuria, makes it of very material importance," but nevertheless questioned a continued US presence there: "The question largely is to what extent we can commit forces continuously, or under special circumstances, for the defense of Korea." Bradley, speaking for the JCS, expressed a similar concern:

> We do not think that Korea is the place to fight a major war. In other words, in case you get into a third world war, I don't think you would choose Korea as a place to fight it. So that we would like to have our forces committed to Korea limited for that reason, and we would also like to limit our commitments there so that these other forces would be available in other parts of the world if something else happens. 250

It is often suggested that the United States entered the Korean War to protect its position in Japan, in essence doing for the Japanese what they were unable to do for themselves. But, from a purely military perspective, there was no more concern for the US position in Japan than there had been before the invasion of South Korea. MacArthur still discounted the likelihood of a Soviet invasion of Japan, pointing out that this would require an amphibious effort which could be prevented by US control of sea and air

around Japan. Bradley admitted that the possession of Korea by a hostile power would be an added threat to the security of Japan, but did not appear to consider it to be a serious one: "you always have to stop your front line somewhere." Wedemeyer echoed this sentiment, asking "are we going to seize and hold all these potentially vulnerable areas around the world?"[251] The concern for Japan was essentially the same one which was held for all the other vulnerable points around the Soviet periphery, that a perception that the US was in retreat in the face of an unstoppable Soviet onslaught would cause the Japanese to favor neutrality, which would eventually lead to Soviet domination.[252] This may have been accentuated by the proximity of Korea to Japan, and indeed some felt that the US response to the North Korean invasion would be viewed in Japan as an indication of the likely American response in the event of an invasion of Japan.[253] But this type of thinking had previously been discounted; if US policy was based on strategic importance, it was clear that the US would not allow Japan to fall under Communist control regardless of what it might or might not do in Korea. Only by viewing US actions as essentially undifferentiated could the American response to the Korean invasion be construed as a precedent applicable to Japan.

The United States, then, intervened in Korea primarily to demonstrate its resolve to resist further Communist

advances, and specifically to forestall a series of piecemeal acts of aggression. Truman believed that a failure to respond would be tantamount to appeasement, and that this would only lead to a larger holocaust, just as the earlier attempts to appease Hitler had lead to World War II. Unfortunately for the United States, the Korean War did not end neatly with a UN victory. It did not end at all. In fact, it took years of hard fighting and negotiating just to arrive at an armistice. The process of obtaining that armistice, however, led to a formalization of the US commitment far beyond anything contemplated in the crisis climate of June 1950.

C. FORMALIZATION OF COMMITMENT

In the process of securing Korean acquiescence to the armistice which eventually ended the fighting, the United States, albeit reluctantly, agreed to enter into a mutual defense treaty with the ROK.[254] The US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty was signed on 1 October 1953, approved by the Senate on 26 January 1954, and finally ratified by the President on 5 February 1954. Article III of the treaty provided that

> Each party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the Parties in territories now under their respective administrative control, or hereafter recognized by one of the Parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.

This article was carefully worded to limit the extent of the US commitment; US policymakers were seriously concerned that President Rhee would attack North Korea in a last ditch attempt to reunite his country, and thereby drag the United States into a renewed round of fighting. To meet this concern, Article III differed from other treaties in that it limited the territory to which the treaty applied. The report of the Secretary of State transmitting the draft treaty to the President further emphasized that "The undertaking of each party to aid the other operates only in case that party is the victim of external armed attack." The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, in its report on the treaty, explained that the phraseology limiting the territorial extent of the treaty was in response to concern

> over the possibility that the United States might be called upon to give aid in the event the Korean Republic should seek to extend its dominion over North Korea either by unprovoked attack on that area or by some other means not regarded as lawful by the United States.

The Senate felt so strongly about this that the resolution giving its advice and consent contained a special clause emphasizing these limitations in Article III; the treaty was ratified with this clause appended as the "Understanding of the United States."[255]

Article III of the treaty was also limited insofar as it contained the provision that any action would be taken in accordance with the constitutional processes of the respective parties, language which Secretary of State Dulles

termed the "Monroe Doctrine" formula. The Korean treaty was not unique in this regard, since this formula was also contained in the Philippine and ANZUS treaties upon which the US-ROK treaty was modeled. It did differ, however, from the unique wording of the NATO treaty, in which an attack upon one signatory is treated as an attack upon all. The ROK wanted this type of commitment, and has from time to time expressed a desire to renegotiate the treaty to change this provision.[256]

The second most significant article in the treaty was Article IV, which formed the basis for the US military presence in Korea: "The Republic of Korea grants, and the United States of America accepts, the right to dispose United States land, air and sea forces in and about the territory of the Republic of Korea as determined by mutual agreement." Secretary of State Dulles pointed out, however, that this article "does not make such disposition automatic or mandatory." The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations noted that there was "no obligation for the United States to maintain any armed forces whatsoever in Korea," but that doing so would be "in our national interests for the time being."[257]

An agreement between the US and the ROK on 17 November 1954 stipulated that the United States would support the development of "a strengthened Republic of Korea military establishment," and that ROK forces would be retained "under

the operational control of the United Nations Command while that Command has responsibility for the defense of the Republic of Korea."[258]

The Appendix to this agreement on US support for the Korean military illustrated the incredibly pervasive influence of the United States at that time. The American military in essence created the Korean military. The US agreed to support a ROK force totaling 720,000 men, but stipulated how this number would be divided among the various services. The US recommended a revised organization for the ROK Army. A ROK Navy of 70 ships was to be established, but these ships were only on loan for five years from the United States, which could reclaim them at any time. The US agreed to provide jet fighters and trainers, but only "in such quantities and at such times as the Korean Air Force pilots have demonstrated the capability to properly utilize this equipment." Finally, it was stipulated that "The Republic of Korea military budget will be jointly reviewed and analyzed by the Republic of Korea and CINCUNC in order to assure that the military program will produce the most effective forces at minimum cost."[259]

Clearly, the dominant concern of the United States when the Mutual Defense Treaty was ratified was that it would be drawn into another Korean war, most likely as a result of a South Korean attack on the north. Nevertheless, the United States was undeniably committed in Korea, and there were

American soldiers on the ground. Out of concern for the security of these forces as much as anything else, it was decided to strengthen the armed forces of the Republic of Korea so that they would be able to fend for themselves. The United States was still worried about what the Koreans would do with an expanded military establishment, as they had been before the Korean war, but were now somewhat comforted by the thought that the ROK military was under the operational control of the American general serving as the United Nations commander.

VII. CONCLUSION

From the moment that the United States decided to place troops in South Korea to prevent occupation of the entire peninsula by Soviet forces, US policy toward Korea has been a function of US-Soviet relations. As such, it has been effected by all the cataclysmic events and wild swings which have characterized this relationship.

Two major themes stand out in particular. One, which has been examined in detail in this study, is the still unresolved conflict between the situational and non-situational approaches to commitment. Another, corollary themes is the conflcit between resources and commitments. There has been a constant tension between the natural American desire to ascribe to the nonsituational approach on the one hand and the reality of limited resources on the other. Initially, the US resolved this conflict in Asia by limiting commitments. Later, faced with a growing threat from what appeared to be a monolithic Communist movement, the US decided that it could no longer afford to place any limits on its interests, which were viewed as an indissoluble whole.

This shift affected the way in which the United States selected allies. Kennan had urged selectivity in this

process, arguing that democracy could only be spread to those who wanted it themselves, and reserving limited US aid for those areas in which it was the missing component in an otherwise promising situation. Those who came after him, notably Nitze and Dulles, took a broader view, arguing that, in a hostile world, American security required the spread of democracy.

These conflicts have been evident in US relations with many of its allies over the years. Only the areas in which the US has clearly vital interests, such as NATO and Japan, have proven immune from these vagaries. They enjoy a situational commitment which does not ride on the tide of US-Soviet relations. The US commitment to Korea, on the other hand, is clearly nonsituational, regardless of the rhetoric which may periodically emanate from Washington.

The running debate between the nonsituational and situational approaches to commitment formed the basis for the formulation of US policy toward Korea between World War II and the Korean War. Indeed, it is surprising how consistently the same themes emerged again and again. Decisions were made, and polices changed, but the basic issue was never truly resolved. The debate continued even after the US became involved in the Korean War.

The essential dilemma is that, while the US does not really want or need Korea, it does not want its enemies to have it either. The initial solution was the establishment

of a trusteeship. When this failed, the US tried to bow out gracefully, but was prevented from doing so by the blatant nature of the North Korean invasion. Ultimately, it was the process rather than the content of the act which proved most significant.

Once embroiled in the Korean War, the US could not find a mechanism for going back to a state of lesser involvement. This became even more difficult after the US made a formal commitment to the ROK as part of the price for securing Seoul's acquiesecence to the armistice ending the war. So the resultant US policy has been, and remains, an uneasy compromise.

NOTES

(Extensive use has been made of the Foreign Relations of the United States series published by the United States Department of State. These books are referred to as FR, followed by the year, the specific volume number, and the page(s).)

[1]U.S., Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, Investigation of Korean-American Relations, Report (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 61.

[2]The following section is based on Franklin B. Weinstein, "The Concept of a Commitment in International Relations," Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. XIII, no. 1 (March 1969), pp. 39-56.

[3]Akira Iriye, The Cold War in Asia: A Historical Introduction (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 67

[4]Claude A. Buss, The United States and the Republic of Korea: Background for Policy (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), p. 56; and Iriye, p. 75.

[5]Claude A. Buss, "At the Beginning," in Reflections on a Century of United States-Korean Relations (University Press of America, 1983), pp. 56-62.

[6]Michael Schaller, The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 292. George Kennan believed that the US was deluding itself by thinking that China might be a viable alternative to Japan in the regional power structure. He felt that the removal of Japan would, because of China's weakness, inevitably result in an increased role for the Soviet Union. George F. Kennan, Memoirs: 1950-1963 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), pp. 47-48.

[7]Iriye, p. 84.

[8]Ibid., p. 77.

[9]John Lewis Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 14.

[10]Stephen Pelz, "U.S. Decisions on Korean Policy, 1943-1950: Some Hypotheses," in Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953, ed. Bruce Cumings (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), p. 98. Pelz explains that satisficing involves accepting the most readily available acceptable solution rather than searching for an optimal solution. Ibid., p. 95, cites Herbert Simon, Models of Man: Social and Rational (New York: Wiley, 1957), pp. 203-206, 246-253. Pelz also points out that, for Roosevelt, "the future of Korea ranked near the bottom of his list of priorities," a fact forgotten by some analysts. Ibid., p. 99.

[11]It remained, however, incredibly vague. At the end of the war, Assistant Secretary of State Dunn acknowledged that the "oral understanding" reached at Yalta was, as far as he knew,"the only international agreement which relates to Korea." FR 1945 6:1038.

[12]Iriye, p. 95. According to Iriye, "The Yalta agreements on China suggest that, as far as the framework of postwar politics was concerned, the United States was looking to the Soviet Union as a stabilizing force, as a partner in the new equilibrium, rather than to a balance of power among America, Russia, China, and Britain on the mainland of Asia . . . . China as a power was no longer as relevant to American policy as bilateral cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union . . ."

[13]John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 9.

[14]Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, Volume 1: Year of Decisions (New York: Doubleday, 1955, paperback ed., New York: Signet Books, 1965), p. 423; and John Lewis Gaddis, "Korea in American Politics, Strategy, and Diplomacy, 1945-50," in The Origins of the Cold War in Asia, eds. Yonosuke Nagai and Akira Iriye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 278.

[15]FR Berlin 2:1462-1469. See also Ernest R. May, "Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 53.

[16]FR Potsdam 2:631.

[17]FR 1945 7:967; and Truman, p. 478.

[18]Truman, p. 478.

[19]FR 1945 6:1039; and Truman, p. 490.

[20]FR 1945 6:1039.

[21]Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 111; and James I. Matray, The Reluctant Crusade: American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941-1950 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), p. 32.

[22]Cumings, Origins of the Korean War, p. 120. See also Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 42. The term "premature containment" is in Bruce Cumings, "The American Occupation of Korea: The 'Reverse Course' First," paper presented at the Occupation Conference, The Hoover Institution, 16 May 1986, p. 11.

[23]Cumings, Origins of the Korean War, p. 113. See also Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 45. Matray contends that Truman "believed that if Stalin dominated the Korean peninsula, the Soviet Union could undermine Chiang's government in China and put the security of Japan in jeopardy."

[24]Pelz, pp. 104-105.

[25]Gaddis, "Korea in American Politics," p. 278.

[26]Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 36; and May, p. 53.

[27]Pelz, p. 105n. Pelz contends that "there is little evidence that Truman or Byrnes considered Korea vital to the security of Northeast Asia or of the United States."

[28]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p.15.

[29]FR 1945 6:1096-1103. Matray contends that, while Truman and his advisers had hoped at Potsdam to forestall Soviet entry into Northeast Asia, by the end of 1945 they had "returned to the trusteeship formula as the only way short of war to achieve Korean independence and self-government," although even at that early juncture it did not appear that this approach would succeed. Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 61.

[30]FR 1945 6:1074.

[31]Ibid., pp. 1097-1099. In May 1946, William Langdon, the Political Adviser in Korea, suggested a timetable for reciprocal withdrawal of US and Soviet forces resulting in

final withdrawal by February 1947, arguing that "there will never be any normal political or economic life in Korea or unhampered operation of a trusteeship so long as Soviet troops remain in the country." FR 1946 8:667-674.

[32]May, pp. 54-55.

[33]U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States and the Korean Problem, Documents 1943-1953 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 4.

[34]FR 1946 8:637.

[35]Ibid., p. 681.

[36]As Kim Chull Baum observes, "The main reason for the failure of the Joint Commission was that both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were determined to create a Korean government favorable to their interests." Chull Baum Kim, "U.S. Withdrawal Decision from South Korea, 1945-1949" (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1984), p. 38.

[37]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 18.

[38]FR 1946 8:682, 698.

[39]FR 1945 6:1143-1144.

[40]Donald S. Macdonald, "The 1946 Elections and Legislative Assembly in South Korea: America's Bumbling Tutelage," Journal of Northeast Asian Studies, pp. 53-69.

[41]Ibid., p. 63.

[42]Gaddis, Origins of the Cold War, p. 284.

[43]Ibid., pp. 290-313.

[44]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 18.

[45]FR 1946 6:696-709; and Kennan, Memoirs, p. 294.

[46]Gaddis, Origins of the Cold War, p. 304.

[47]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 21.

[48]Gaddis, Origins of the Cold War, pp. 304-312.

[49]Ibid., p. 317.

[50]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 23.

[51]Robert Endicott Osgood, Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 154.

[52]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 23.

[53]Warner R. Schilling, "The Politics of National Defense: Fiscal 1950," in Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets, by Warner R. Schilling, Paul Y. Hammond and Glenn H. Snyder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 100.

[54]Kim, p. 21.

[55]Langdon, the political adviser in Korea, criticized Washington for not having planned for the contingency of Russian refusal to cooperate on trusteeship. FR 1945 6:1141.

[56]FR 1946 8:692-706.

[57]Ibid., p. 719. See also James Matray, "Korea: Test Case of Containment in Asia," in Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953, ed. Bruce Cumings (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), p. 315.

[58]Kim, p. 87.

[59]FR 1946 8:718-719.

[60]Ibid., p. 728.

[61]Ibid., pp. 706-709. Pauley did, however, express concern that Korea could be used by the Russians to encircle either China or Japan.

[62]Ibid., pp. 713-714. This was a major bureaucratic victory for the State Department, since Truman's response was drafted in State based on a memorandum by John Carter Vincent, Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs.

[63]Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 104. In this regard, Matray sees the effort to develop southern Korea as "a prime example of Truman's preference for economic rather than military means to counter the Soviet challenge to those nations that were important but not vital to American national security." Ibid., p.172.

[64]FR 1946 8:754-755. Cumings argues persuasively that the uprisings were not started by outside agitators, but by "local committee leaders and their supporters driven by deep

grievances and life-and-death interests." These issues concerned "land conditions and relations, grain collection inequities, and the local interlocking of landlord, government official, and policeman." Cumings, Origins of the Korean War, pp. 352, 367.

[65]FR 1946 8:766-770.

[66]Kim, p. 102.

[67]Ibid., p. 116.

[68]FR 1947 6:608-618. The report did admit that if "all other attempts to solve the Korean problem fail, it might eventually become desirable to refer it to the United Nations."

[69]FR 1947 6:612-613.

[70]Ibid, p. 614.

[71]FR 1948 6:1293.

[72]Charles M. Dobbs, The Unwanted Symbol: American Foreign Policy, the Cold War, and Korea, 1945-1950 (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1981), p. 93.

[73]FR 1947 6:612.

[74]Dobbs, pp. 96-97, cites RG 353, Box 86, Decimal File 334, SANACC, Interdepartmental Korea, Mar. 31, 1947, p. 16.

[75]Kim, pp. 121-122.

[76]U.S., Department of State, Department of State Bulletin, 23 March 1947, pp. 534-537.

[77]Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1969), p. 225. Also see Gaddis, Origins of the Cold War, p. 351.

[78]John Lewis Gaddis, "Was the Truman Doctrine a Real Turning Point?," Foreign Affairs 52 (January 1974):390.

[79]Gaddis, Origins of the Cold War, p. 317.

[80]Osgood, pp. 141-147.

[81]Kennan, Memoirs, pp. 319-321.

[82]FR 1947 3:229-230.

[83]Gaddis, Origins of the Cold War, p. 352.

[84]May, pp. 57-58.

[85]Acheson to Marshall, June 27, 1947, in RG 59, decimal file 740.00119, Control (Korea)/6-2747, cited in Matray, "Test Case of Containment," p. 175.

[86]Kim, p. 130.

[87]FR 1948 1:663-669.

[88]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 23.

[89]George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", Foreign Affairs 25 (July 1947):575.

[90]Walter Lippmann, The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), p. 18.

[91]Kennan, Memoirs, pp. 357-360.

[92]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 55.

[93]FR 1948 1:526-528.

[94]Ibid., pp. 546-550.

[95]Kennan, Memoirs, pp. 359. See also Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, pp. 30-60.

[96]"NSC 58: United States Policy Toward the Soviet Satellite States in Eastern Europe," 14 September 1949, in Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis, eds. Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 211-223. This study referred specifically to Eastern Europe, but its arguments are if anything even more applicable to Asia.

[97]FR 1948 1:546-550; and FR 1947 1:772-777.

[98]Kennan, Memoirs, p. 358.

[99]FR 1947 1:772-777.

[100]FR 1948 1:523-526.

[101]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 60.

[102]Walter Millis, ed., The Forrestal Diaries (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), pp. 241-242.

[103]Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 100.

[104]Kim, p. 124.

[105]FR 1947 6:626-627.

[106]FR 1947 1:737-745. See also Kim, p. 133.

[107]Millis, Forrestal Diaries, p. 273.

[108]FR 1947 6:649.

[109]Ibid., p. 710.

[110]Ibid., p. 713 n41.

[111]Dobbs, p. 108.

[112]FR 1947 6:738.

[113]Ibid., pp. 740-741.

[114]Kim, pp. 150-151.

[115]FR 1947 6:784-785. Kim contends that the Stevens memo "testifies to a fundamental shift in State Department policy." Kim, p. 153.

[116]FR 1947 6:803-807.

[117]Ibid., p. 803. General Stilwell considered Wedemeyer to be "the world's most pompous prick." Daily diary entry of May 14, 1944, Stilwell Papers, cited in Schaller, U.S. Crusade in China, p. 164.

[118]Kennan, Memoirs, p. 484; and Kim, p. 191.

[119]FR 1947 6:814.

[120]FR 1947 1:772-777.

[121]FR 1947 6:817.

[122]William Whitney Stueck, Jr., The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950 (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 86.

[123]FR 1947 6:820.

[124]Gregory Henderson, Korea: The Politics of the Vortex (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 149-150.

[125]Matray, "Test Case of Containment," p. 177.

[126]Kim, p. 176.

[127]FR 1947 6:858.

[128]FR 1948 6:1113.

[129]Ibid., p. 1137.

[130]Ibid., pp. 1138-1139.

[131]Kim, pp. 176, 204 and 31 n67.

[132]NSC 8, FR 1948 6:1164-1169.

[133]Matray, "Test Case of Containment," p. 182.

[134]Pelz, pp. 110-111.

[135]Matray, "Test Case of Containment," p. 184.

[136]Paul Y. Hammond, "Super Carriers and B-36 Bombers: Appropriations, Strategy and Politics," in American Civil-Military Decisions: A Book of Case Studies, ed. Harold Stein (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1963), p. 471.

[137]Millis, "Forrestal Diaries," pp. 374-376.

[138]Hammond, "Super Carriers", p. 473.

[139]FR 1948 6:1187.

[140]Stueck, pp. 31, 102.

[141]FR 1948 6:1201.

[142]Ibid., p. 1225.

[143]Ibid., p. 1226.

[144]Ibid., p. 1235.

[145]Ibid., p. 1209.

[146]Ibid., p. 1277.

[147]Hammond, "Super Carriers," pp. 476-479.

[148]FR 1948 6:1298-1299.

[149]Ibid., pp. 1309-1310.

[150]U.S., Department of State, A Historical Summary of United States-Korean Relations (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 71.

[151]FR 1948 6:1318; and Robert K.Sawyer, with Walter G. Hermes, ed., Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1962), pp. 39-40.

[152]FR 1948 6:1326-1327.

[153]Ibid., p. 1324.

[154]Ibid., pp. 1341-1343.

[155]Kim, p. 231.

[156]FR 1948 6:1337-1340. Kim, however, characterizes their argument on the impact of withdrawal on Japan as "a shaky psycho-social scenario." Kim, p. 231.

[157]FR 1949 7:942-945.

[158]Ibid., pp. 945-946. See also Sawyer, p. 37.

[159]FR 1949 7:956-959.

[160]NSC 8/2, FR 1949 7:969-978.

[161]Matray, "Test Case of Containment," pp. 191-192.

[162]FR 1948 1:531-534; and FR 1948 6:700-701.

[163]John Lewis Gaddis, "The Strategic Perspective: The Rise and Fall of the "Defensive Perimeter" Concept, 1947-1951," in Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950, eds. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 65-66.

[164]Ibid., pp. 66-69.

[165]FR 1947 7:840.

[166]Gaddis, "Strategic Perspective," pp. 70-74.

[167]Ibid., pp. 74-76.

[168]FR 1949 7:999, 1007, 1016.

[169]The Army study is in FR 1949 7:1047-1056.

[170]FRUS 1949 7:1056-1057.

[171]Kim contends that the purpose of the 11 June 1949 study was "to prevent a commitment which would risk later U.S. involvement in a Korean War." Kim, p. 252.

[172]FR 1948 6:1293. Out of $500 million provided between 1945 and 1948 under US Army military government, 90% was relief - clothing, fuel, fertilizer and fuel - and only 10% was for economic development. Investigation of Korean-American Relations, p. 160.

[173]FR 1948 6:1292-1298. Interestingly, Saltzman recommended that this plan not be made public "to avoid the implication of any commitment to Korea . . ."

[174]FR 1949 7:973-978.

[175]Sawyer, pp. 8-10. As John Lovell notes, police and military functions were "largely undifferentiated" for the first six months. John P. Lovell, "The Military and Politics in Postwar Korea," in Korean Politics in Transition, ed. Edward Reynolds Wright (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1975), p. 155.

[176]Sawyer, pp. 11-21.

[177]Ibid., pp. 21-24.

[178]Ibid., p. 25; Henderson, Korea, p. 336. Lovell contends that students in the first class at the English language school were "selected largely from candidates nominated by six of the leading private armed political factions in South Korea." Lovell, p. 156.

[179]Lee Young-woo, "Birth of the Korean Army, 1945-50: Evaluation of the Role of the U.S. Occupation Forces," Korea & World Affairs, vol. 4, no. 4 (Winter 1980), p. 646. In support of this, Lee points out that protrusteeship students at the English language school were forceably driven out by their antitrusteeship classmates.

[180]Ibid., p. 654-655; Lovell. p. 163-164; and Sawyer, p. 40.

[181]Sawyer, pp. 29, 38.

[182]FR 1949 7:973-978.

[183]Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 208. Rhee made no secret of his intention to "move north" in his 8 February 1949 meeting with Royall and Muccio, and the personal impact this made on the Secretary of the Army should not be discounted. FR 1949 7:957.

[184]Department of State Bulletin, 19 June 1949, pp. 782-783.

[185]Ibid., pp. 783-786.

[186]Ibid., p. 782. The Army, prior to completion of withdrawal on 29 June 1949, had already transferred to the Koreans, under the Surplus Property Act, "military equipment, the original acquisition cost for which to the United States had been 56 million, but which had a replacement value at the time it was turned over of $110 million." U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services and Committee on Foreign Relations, Military Situation in the Far East, Hearings to Conduct an Inquiry into the Military Situation in the Far East and the Facts Surrounding the Relief of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur from his Assignments in that Area (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 1993.

[187]Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 199.

[188]U.S., Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, United States Policy in the Far East, Part 2, Historical Series, Selected Executive Session Hearings of the Committee, Volume VIII (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 13.

[189]Stueck, p. 157, cites interviews with MG Charles L. Bolte and BG Thomas B. Timberman, the officers who testified before Congress. The testimony can be found in United States Policy in the Far East, Part 2.

[190]United States Policy in the Far East, Part 2, pp. 59, 168 and 193.

[191]Ibid., pp. 46, 33-34.

[192]Ibid., pp. 238, 48 and 80.

[193]Ibid., pp. 164, 185 and 48.

[194]Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 219.

[195]United States Policy in the Far East, Part 2, p. 410.

[196]Ibid., pp. 16-17. Jackson's comment is from New York Times, 1 Feb 1950, p. 13.

[197]United States and the Korean Problem, p. 33.

[198]United States Policy in the Far East, Part 2, p. 408.

[199]Military Situation in the Far East, p. 1993.

[200]Sawyer, p. 97.

[201]FR 1950 7:17, 79, 82.

[202]Sawyer, p. 100. The Army was also legitimately concerned about the absorption capacity of the ROK forces. Many of the vehicles, weapons and items of individual equipment transferred to the Koreans quickly became unserviceable. In addition, out of 51 million rounds of ammunition delivered in June 1949, only 19 million rounds were left by the end of the year. Ibid., p. 98.

[203]Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 230.

[204]United States Policy in the Far East, Part 2, p. 464. By a major war, Rusk meant one with Russian support, since it was believed that the North Koreans alone were not capable of defeating the south. Ibid., p. 465.

[205]Military Situation in the Far East, pp. 1993-1994.

[206]FR 1949 7:1210-1213.

[207]FR 1950 1:160-162.

[208]Michael Schaller, The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 195-211.

[209]NSC 48/2, FR 1949 7:1215-1220. Gaddis argues that "the President's approval of NSC 48/2 and NSC 58/2 within three weeks of each other in December 1949 . . . reflected a carefully thought-out strategy of using Titoism to roll back Soviet influence in the Communist world." Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 70.

[210]James Matray, "Truman's Plan for Victory: National Self-Determination and the Thirty-Eighth Parallel Decision in Korea," Journal of American History, vol. 66, no. 2 (September 1979):317.

[211]Gaddis, "Korea in American Politics," p. 286.

[212]Matray, "Truman's Plan for Victory," p. 316.

[213]Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 145-146. They do, however, feel that the original decision was "eminently rational, given the set of premises and constraints that governed formulation of U.S. foreign policy at the time." Ibid., p. 148.

[214]Kim, p. 269.

[215]Department of State Bulletin, 16 Jan 1950, pp. 79-81.

[216]Acheson's speech is in Department of State Bulletin, 23 Jan 1950, pp. 111-118.

[217]The quotation is from Samuel F. Wells, Jr., "Sounding the Tocsin: NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat," International Security, vol. 4, no. 2 (Fall 1979):117.

[218]Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, pp. 84-85.

[219]Ibid., p. 70; and Gaddis, "Strategic Perspective," p. 93.

[220]Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), pp. 470-490.

[221]Acheson, pp. 354-362.

[222]Buss, United States and the Republic of Korea, p. 62. Gaddis points out that domestic politcal pressures also limited the administration's ability to distinguish between vital and peripheral interests. Gaddis, "Truman Doctrine," p. 394.

[223]Waldo Heinrichs, "American China Policy and the Cold War in Asia: A New Look," in Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950, eds. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 287.

[224]Gaddis, "Truman Doctrine," p. 394.

[225]George and Smoke, p. 149.

[226]FR 1950 1:142.

[227]Ibid., pp. 145-146.

[228]Ibid., p. 253.

[229]Ibid., p. 241.

[230]Ibid., pp. 264-265.

[231]Ibid., p. 278.

[232]Ibid., p. 240.

[233]Ibid., pp. 237-238.

[234]Ibid., pp. 282-286.

[235]Steven L. Rearden, The Evolution of American Strategic Doctrine: Paul H. Nitze and the Soviet Challenge (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), p. 25.

[236]According to Gaddis, "World order, and with it American security, had come to depend as much on perceptions of the balance of power as on what that balance actually was. . . . The effect was vastly to increase the number and variety of interests deemed relevant to the national security, and to blur the distinctions between them." Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p. 92. See also Gaddis, "NSC 68 and the Problem of Ends and Means," International Security, vol. 4, no. 4 (Spring 1980):166-168.

[237]FR 1950 1:314.

[238]Nitze's position is in Paul Nitze, "The Development of NSC 68," International Security, vol. 4, no. 4 (Spring 1980):174.

[239]The best account is Glenn D. Paige, The Korean Decision: June 24-30, 1950 (New York: The Free Press, 1968). See also May, pp. 52-86.

[240]FR 1950 7:237. See also Matray, Reluctant Crusade, p. 227.

[241]Military Situation in the Far East, pp. 1818-1819.

[242]Gaddis, "Truman Doctrine," p. 402. According to Gaddis, "By suggesting that Russian ambitions were not confined to Europe or the Middle East, and that Stalin would risk war to attain them, the invasion seemed to confirm in the most dramatic way the basic premises of NSC-68. It was of little consequence that the attack occurred in a part of the world whose security the United States had not guaranteed; the blatant nature of the invasion made the defense of South Korea an urgent priority - where open aggression was concerned, distinctions between peripheral and vital

interests became irrelevant." Ibid., p. 396. Norman Levin and Richard Sneider agree, noting that "The U.S. response to the North Korean invasion was thus less a reflection of the strategic importance of Korea than a manifestation of the perceived need to respond to the Soviet challenge." Norman D. Levin and Richard L. Sneider, "Korea in Postwar U.S. Security Policy," in After One Hundred Years: Continuity and Change in Korean-American Relations, ed. Sung-joo Han (Seoul: Asiatic Research Center, Korea University, 1982), p. 243. See also Gaddis, "Strategic Perspective," p. 108, and Strategies of Containment, pp. 109-110.

[243]Seyom Brown, The Faces of Power: Constancy and Change in United States Foreign Policy from Truman to Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 59.

[244]Iriye, pp. 176-178. Iriye asserts that the emergence of a unified China as a Soviet ally, coupled with the concomitant rehabilitation of Japan as a mainstay of the US presence in the region, made both powers "more rigid in seeking to preserve their respective areas of dominance and power." He sees the Korean War, in this context, as "an aspect of the two powers' continuing desire to consolidate their respective positions . . ."

[245]Matray, Reluctant Crusade pp. 176, 199, 251-252.

[246]Ibid., p. 256.

[247]Ibid., p. 254. See also Pelz 112. Pelz feels that Truman responded primarily for political reasons.

[248]Military Situation in the Far East, p. 3211.

[249]Ibid., pp. 1110-1111, 2363.

[250]Ibid., pp. 373, 895.

[251]Ibid., pp. 6, 1111, 2474.

[252]There were serious concerns about communism in Japan. See, for example, Paul Langer and Rodger Swearingen, "The Japanese Communist Party, the Soviet Union and Korea," Pacific Affairs, vol. XXIII, no. 4 (December 1950):339-355.

[253]FR 1950 7:151.

[254]In a State Department-JCS meeting on 29 May 1953, General J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, argued that "we should be prepared to take Rhee into protective custody rather than try to sweeten him up with a security pact."

FR 1952-1954 15:1118. The next day, however, the President approved a State-Defense recommendation to agree to a bilateral security pact rather than establish a United Nations Command military government in Korea. Ibid., p. 1128.

[255]U.S. Department of State, American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, Basic Documents, 2 volumes (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1957), pp.897-907.

[256]Ibid., p. 907.

[257]Ibid., pp. 898-908.

[258]Ibid., pp. 2734-2735.

[259]U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Selected Executive Session Hearings of the Committee, 1951-56, volume XII, Mutual Security Program, part 4 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1980), pp. 677-678.

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